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ABSTRACT

A LAY MOBILIZATION PROGRAM FOR THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN ZIMBABWE

by

Cuthbert Machamire

Adviser: R. Clifford Jones

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE SCHOOL RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A LAY MOBILIZATION PROGRAM FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

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Date completed: March 2009

Problem

The church in Zimbabwe involves lay people in ministry, but the proportion of people involved is small compared to the total membership of the church. Further, while the church believes in the biblical teaching on spiritual gifts, this concept is not given enough emphasis in enlisting members for ministry. This results in some members experiencing frustration as they serve in ministries for which they are not gifted. Others stay uninvolved either because they are not personally invited to take part, or because they do not find a ministry in the church that matches their gifts.

Method

In this dissertation, I set out to understand the teaching of Scripture regarding spiritual gifts in ministry. I consulted the Bible, Bible commentaries, periodicals, books, and web resources to gain an understanding of scriptural teaching and the views of other writers. I conducted several interviews with church leaders in Zimbabwe. I also conducted a survey among Zimbabweans living in the United States of America to establish their views and experience about lay ministry in Zimbabwe. A similar survey was sent to Zimbabwe but results were not easy to get given the prevailing economic situation that made movement too costly and impractical.

Results

This research strengthened my conviction that God expects all believers to participate in ministry in the context of their spiritual gifts. I was impressed with the emphasis placed on evangelism in Zimbabwe, but was concerned that the church appears to focus more on implementing programs and achieving goals than in ensuring that each member is having a role to play in ministry.

Conclusions

There is need to educate both leadership and the church at large in Zimbabwe concerning God's call to every member and the enabling gifts that come along with this call. It is my conviction that if the church in Zimbabwe can educate members about their spiritual gifts and aim to involve all members in ministry, God's work will prosper much more than is presently the case.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A LAY MOBILIZATION PROGRAM FOR THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN ZIMBABWE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Cuthbert Machamire

March 2009

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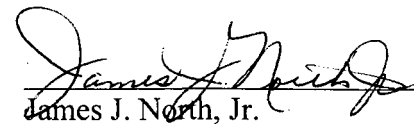
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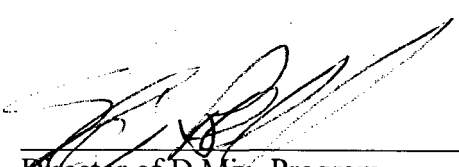
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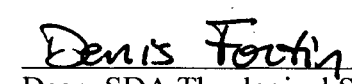
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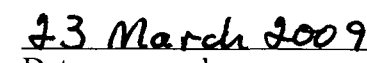

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

In Zimbabwe the Seventh-day Adventist Church involves many lay people in the ministry of the church. Some serve as evangelists or preachers, some as church leaders, while others serve in different capacities in the various departments of the church. However, the percentage of people that are involved in these ministries is very small compared to the total membership of the church. Further, of those involved in the various ministries, the church seems to give publicity and high regard to a few conspicuous gifts. As a result, many people in the church do not realize the importance of their own spiritual gifts and therefore they either do not use them at all or they use them minimally. This limits the success and growth of the church since there is a lot of untapped talent. The Adventist Church in Zimbabwe is not growing as fast as it should because of this poor management of personnel resources in the church.

Purpose of Dissertation

The task of this project is to study biblical teaching on the issue of spiritual gifts and lay ministry and create a manual that can be used to educate ministers and lay leaders in Zimbabwe on how to best utilize and affirm the various spiritual gifts of different members in the church for the success and growth of the church.

Justification of the Dissertation

The Bible teaches that God bestows upon all believers spiritual gifts, which are special abilities afforded to different individuals in the church.

The Bible further teaches that all spiritual gifts have been given for the purpose of equipping the church as it seeks to fulfill the gospel commission (Eph 4:11, 12).

The church in Zimbabwe has much more talent than it is currently utilizing.

Of those it is utilizing, the church seems to treat some people's gifts as more important than others through the way it highlights some gifts and almost ignores the existence and participation of other gifts.

The church is not growing as fast as it should and it is not as healthy as it should be because many members have assumed the role of spectators who sit and cheer while other members perform ministry.

Definition of Terms

A number of words used in this dissertation have certain connotations with respect to the subject under review. While most of these are English words, definitions have been given to reflect the meaning they assume in this dissertation. Names of organizations relating to the Adventist Church have also been given for the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with Adventist church structure.

Cessationist: One who subscribes to the theological view that miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit such as tongues, prophecy, and healing ceased with or soon after the ministry of the apostles, who were the exclusive recipients of these gifts. This view holds that only the non-miraculous gifts are operational in the church today. It is also known as the temporary view.

General Conference: The governing body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference office in Silver Spring, MD, serves as the world headquarters of the church.

Homogeneous unit principle: A philosophy propounded by Donald A. McGavran which holds that humans tend to show a predisposition to gravitate towards those of their own kind.

Inreach: Refers to programs aimed at meeting the needs of members of the church as opposed to non-members.

Non-cessationist: One who subscribes to the theological view that all gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament are still operational in the church today. This view is also known as the permanent view or continuationism.

Outreach: Refers to programs aimed at ministering to the needs of non-members. It is hoped that inreach programs will enhance membership retention while outreach programs will bring new members into the church.

Scripture Union: An international Christian organization that facilitates formation of Christian clubs at school campuses to encourage students to read the Bible and share their faith with school mates and other young people. While the Scripture Union is by definition a non-denominational organization, in Zimbabwe the Pentecostal Movement has played in major role in the facilitation of the campus clubs and Pentecostal students on school campuses are very active both in regular attendance of club meetings and recruiting new members, including those of a non-Pentecostal background.

Skills: An individual's abilities, whether acquired as a natural endowment, through education, or experience.

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID): A regional office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that oversees the work of the church in Southern Africa and the Malagasy Republic. The Zimbabwe Union falls within the territory of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

Spiritual gifts: Abilities that God gives to members of the church body to enable them to participate in ministry and in building up of the church. Some of these gifts may be supernaturally bestowed at a later time in life, while the Bible also includes some natural endowments on the lists of spiritual gifts. Under the control and leadership of the Holy Spirit, such natural endowments can also be transformed to function as spiritual gifts that serve to build up and equip the church for ministry.

Talents: Usually relates to a person's natural abilities. The term can also be loosely used to include spiritual gifts and other skills that one acquires through education and experience. Believers who submit their lives to the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit will often have their natural endowments and learned skills transformed into spiritual gifts that equip the church for ministry.

Unentered area: This is an expression Adventists use to refer to places that have not been reached with the Adventist message.

Voice of Prophecy (VOP): An arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which conducts evangelism through Bible correspondence schools as well as radio and television ministries.

Zimbabwe Union Conference: A regional office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that oversees the work of the church across Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Union

has three sub-regional organizations known as the East, Central, and Western Zimbabwe Conference.

Zunde: An old custom in Zimbabwe whereby the subjects of a chief would all gather in his field to work during the agricultural season as a way of paying homage to him. Churches in Zimbabwe have adopted this term in launching a system of evangelism where they combine evangelism with working in the fields of those they will be preaching and witnessing to. The church takes this as a form of working in God's field.

Limitations of Dissertation

The economic meltdown currently prevailing in Zimbabwe made it difficult to conduct a thorough research on the ground in the country due to transportation and communication difficulties. As a result, not as much data was collected on the current situation in Zimbabwe as the author would have wished. It is however the author's belief that the limited data that was obtained does provide valuable insights on the current state of Adventist church ministry in the country.

While the principles outlined in this dissertation may be useful in other parts of the world, the dissertation was written specifically with the Zimbabwean context in mind. As a result, not everything advocated in this document will be applicable in other parts of the world. One would need to pay attention to the dynamics affecting each local situation when implementing ideas proposed herein.

Methodology

A theological study of the subject of spiritual gifts and lay ministry was undertaken to establish biblical teaching on the subject. Current literature was also

studied in order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject and its relevance in modern times. A study of churches having success in gifts-based lay ministry was carried out which yielded fresh ideas on how churches today can be relevant to their communities through mobilizing the diverse talent in their congregations. Finally, a manual was created for educating pastors and lay leaders on the subject of a gifts-based lay ministry. This manual is also intended to be used by the local leaders in educating and mobilizing their congregations for ministry.

Expectation of the Project

It is the author's hope that this dissertation will be an educative resource for pastors, lay leaders, and ministerial students wanting to deepen their understanding on the subject of a gifts-based lay ministry. It is also hoped that the training manual included as part of this dissertation will be a useful resource in training both leaders and congregations for lay ministry.

CHAPTER 2

A SURVEY OF BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND LAY MINISTRY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe deserves credit for the use it makes of lay members in its day-to-day operations as it seeks to prepare people in its territory for the second coming of Jesus Christ. While there is a general outcry in many parts of the world about lack of lay involvement in the mission of the church, this is not the problem that the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe faces. To the contrary, the church in Zimbabwe, like the church in many other developing nations, cannot afford to employ as many pastors as the more affluent parts of the Adventist Church. While pastors with larger congregations may be in charge of four or five churches, those with smaller churches will have many more. In May 2008, Douglas Mutanga, Executive Secretary for the East Zimbabwe Conference, indicated that in his conference there was one district (Buhera) in which the pastor was in charge of twenty eight churches and sixteen companies.¹ Such an arrangement makes it inevitable that lay people be involved in church programs as well as administration at the local church level.

In light of the above situation, this dissertation is not focused on merely urging pastors to involve lay people in church work. As stated in chapter one, the dissertation is

¹Douglas Mutanga, E-mail message in response to inquiry from author, May 8, 2008.

not addressing the lack of lay involvement in the ministry of the church but rather their inadequate involvement in ministry. In the planning and execution of its ministry programs, the church in Zimbabwe generally involves a relatively small percentage of its members, comprising mostly of those holding offices and a few others who have achieved a certain level of visibility among their fellow members. The vast majority of members play the role of supportive spectators, often supporting church programs financially, but not directly involved in the hands-on work of ministry. There is need to increase the number of people involved in ministry as well as ensure that those who are involved are utilized in a manner that enhances the quality of ministry they undertake. This chapter will survey what the Bible teaches regarding the involvement of each member in the life and ministry of the church.

Spiritual Gifts in the Early Church

In its infancy, the Christian church does not seem to have relied on the appointment of people to ministry offices as is the case today. A survey of the New Testament gives the impression that believers functioned in a more spontaneous way according to the empowering of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Types of Holy Spirit Manifestation

Paul writes passionately about how those who are in Christ Jesus have their lives controlled by the Holy Spirit and thus live according to the desires and promptings of the Spirit (Rom 8:5-17). There are two major spheres in which the believer can show evidence of being imbued with the Holy Spirit. First, the fruit of the Spirit is produced in the believer's life. Second, the individual shows signs of possessing one or more gifts of

the Spirit and demonstrates a willingness to use those gifts to God's glory. These two concepts are addressed in more detail below.

Fruit of the Spirit

When a person is under the control of the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit is the end result. In Gal 5:22-26, Paul gives a list of what constitutes the fruit of the Spirit. He lists love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control as comprising this fruit. It is significant that Paul uses the singular "fruit" of the Spirit (v. 22).² This is an indication that Paul considers all these qualities to be essential as part of a single package. One cannot experience total discipleship while ignoring or downplaying one or more of these virtues.³ "Fruit of the Spirit" can be defined as "that which naturally develops in the life when the Spirit has control."⁴ As R. Alan Cole points out, these qualities, and many more, are the spontaneous product of the presence of the Spirit in one's life. Cole notes that Jesus enunciated the principle that a tree could be recognized by the fruit that it produced (Matt 7:16); so by the presence of this fruit the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is verified.⁵

In Rom 8:5-9, 12 and 13, Paul divides the human race into two camps; those who are controlled by the Spirit and those who are controlled by sinful nature. Those who are controlled and led by the Spirit will put to death the misdeeds of the flesh. This, again, is

²Quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

³"Galatians," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 6:981.

⁴Ibid.

⁵R. Alan Cole, *Galatians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 219.

an illustration of what it means to bear the fruit of the Spirit. It means being dead to sin and living in obedience to God through the enabling power of the Spirit who will be living in the believer's heart, becoming the motivating factor in all that the believer does.

Spiritual Gifts

Apart from the fruit of the Spirit, the New Testament also talks about gifts of the Spirit, more commonly referred to today as "spiritual gifts." As Jesus received a special anointing of the Spirit that enabled Him to perform His earthly ministry (Acts 10:38), so believers do receive a special anointing in the form of special gifts that enable them to carry out the work of ministry God has assigned them. Wayne Grudem defines spiritual gifts as "any talent or ability which is empowered by the Holy Spirit and able to be used in the ministry of the church."⁶ According to Kenneth Berding, there are three main components to what constitutes spiritual gifts. He sums them up as follows: (1) a spiritual gift represents an ability or endowment; (2) the ability or endowment is given by the Holy Spirit; (3) the ability or endowment is to be used in building up the community of believers.⁷

The idea of building up the community of believers should not be seen as implying that all the gifts are used within the confines of the church gathering. As the church seeks to make itself relevant to its community through service and the proclamation of the gospel, many of these gifts will be used in ministry activities in the community outside of the church setting.

⁶Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 175.

⁷Kenneth Berding, *What Are Spiritual Gifts?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006), 25.

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Before His ascension, Jesus promised His disciples an outpouring of the Holy Spirit after His departure (Luke 24:49; John 14:15-17). In obedience to Jesus' instruction (Acts 1:4), the disciples remained in Jerusalem waiting for the fulfillment of His promise. Jesus assured His disciples that this outpouring of the Spirit would bestow power upon them so they could witness for Him in Jerusalem and abroad (Acts 1:4, 5, 8).

Two Greek words used in the New Testament, *eksousia* and *dunamis*, can both be translated "power" in the English language. *Eksousia* refers to political power in the sense of rule, authority, or dominion.⁸ *Dunamis* refers to ability, capability, strength, or force.⁹ It is this latter word that is used in Acts 1:8, signifying the enabling power that the church would have due to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall note, "The Spirit is the source of Power, not in the sense of political authority granted to someone holding an ecclesiastical office, but rather a practical power enabling those who have this Spirit to perform the missional tasks given them."¹⁰ The outpouring of the Spirit was designed to invigorate the infant church and give it special ability to function successfully as an agent of extending God's kingdom on earth.

A key aspect of the functioning of the Holy Spirit was through the bestowal of spiritual gifts upon believers. The first notable manifestation of spiritual gifts was the incident at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers who were

⁸Barbara Freiberg et al., *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. "eksousia," CD-ROM Bible Works 7 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

⁹Ibid., s.v. "dunamis."

¹⁰Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 34.

gathered in Jerusalem and they spoke in tongues other than their own (Acts 2:1-5). The second chapter of Acts is often remembered for this manifestation of the gift of tongues. However, the Pentecost experience was only the earliest manifestation of the Spirit's power that continued to unfold and is recorded throughout the book of Acts. The numerous workings of the Holy Spirit in the early church have led some scholars to suggest that a more fitting name for the book Acts of the Apostles would be "Acts of the Holy Spirit." This name would be more reflective of the abundance of stories in this book depicting the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.¹¹

Classifications of Spiritual Gifts

There have been numerous attempts to construct systematic approaches to dealing with spiritual gifts. Such efforts range from attempts to come up with comprehensive lists of spiritual gifts to debates about which gifts are still operational in the church today. This section will provide a brief summary and analysis of alternative views held by different scholars with respect to classification of gifts.

Lists of Spiritual Gifts

The Apostle Paul writes about spiritual gifts in three different epistles. His lists of gifts are as follows:

1. *Rom 12:6-8*: prophesy, service, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others (giving), leadership, mercy.

¹¹Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 52.

2. *1 Cor 12:8-10, 28*: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, apostle, teacher, helping, administration.

3. *Eph 4:11*: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher, (or pastors and teachers).

In looking at the above lists, it is clear that Paul did not intend for any of these lists to be viewed as being exhaustive. This is evidenced by the fact that several gifts appear in one list but not in another. In light of this, it is reasonable to conclude that even the combination of all these three lists do not make up what could be viewed as the totality of Paul's list of spiritual gifts.¹² This has a special bearing on the way the Christian church approaches this subject today. Believers need to resist the urge to be limited by definitions or lists of gifts proposed by different Bible scholars as these do not seem to have a solid biblical basis. As Arnold Bittlinger observes, such classifications tend to reflect more the ideas of the interpreter than those of Paul.¹³ While it is appropriate to come up with lists of possible areas of giftedness as a means of establishing guidance in the setting up of ministries in which people may serve, one should resist the temptation to look at any one proposed list as being comprehensive. Gordon D. Fee makes a valid observation in this regard. In commenting on 1 Cor 12:7 he says,

To illustrate the thesis of v. 7 Paul proceeds to offer a sizable list of ways in which the Spirit is manifested in the Christian assembly. Because this is the first of several such listings of "gifts" in the Pauline corpus, considerable interest has been generated over this passage in terms of the nature and meaning of the various gifts themselves.

¹²C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 73.

¹³Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Ministries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 15, 16.

But as noted above, that lies outside Paul's own interest, which is simply to illustrate the *diversity* of the Spirit's activities/manifestations in the church. . . . Paul's concern here is to offer a *considerable* list so that they will stop being singular in their own emphasis.¹⁴

Outside of the Pauline epistles, the apostle Peter urges his readers, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet 4:10). He then goes on to mention speaking the word of God and service as examples of such gifts (v. 11). Hospitality, mentioned in verse 9, seems to fit well as an additional example of a gift. Just as in Paul's case, while Peter gives a few examples of what can rightly be regarded as spiritual gifts, it is clear he is not giving a full list of what he considered to be gifts. With reference to the three lists of gifts in the Pauline epistles and the one list in 1 Peter, Milliard J. Erickson observes, "Since none of the four lists includes all of the gifts found in the other lists, it is quite conceivable that collectively they do not exhaust all possible gifts of the Spirit."¹⁵

Types of Gifts

Other than coming up with different lists of gifts, different scholars have also categorized the various gifts according to their types; that is, they take the gifts and divide them into two or more categories representing either their nature or the type of service they entail. C. Peter Wagner gives a summary of some of the classifications that different scholars have proposed:

¹⁴Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 590.

¹⁵Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 281.

1. Belief in only nine spiritual gifts as listed in 1 Cor 12:8-10 (some classical Pentecostals).
2. Gifts divided into motivations, ministries, and manifestations (Bill Gothard).
3. Gifts divided into speaking gifts, serving gifts and supernatural gifts (David Hocking).
4. Classification as either ordinary or extraordinary gifts (some reformed theologians).
5. Gifts classified as enabling gifts, servicing gifts, and tongues/interpretation (William Baird).
6. Gifts classified as intelligible utterance, power, spiritual discernment, and ecstatic utterance (Jack MacGorman).

Wagner concludes by noting that while all these classifications can have some value if they are useful to the individuals and congregations which are using them, his preference is to use an open ended approach to the classification process.¹⁶ Wagner's approach can be a safeguard against addressing the subject of spiritual gifts with pre-conceived notions that hinder one's ability to grow in understanding.

Duration of Gift Manifestations

An area of great debate among Bible scholars relates to the question of the duration of spiritual gifts. Scholars debate whether all gifts are supposed to be operating today or some were temporary and as such limited to the apostolic era? There are two main positions on this subject, one that sees all gifts as permanent and another that sees

¹⁶Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 78, 79.

some gifts as permanent while others are temporary. In his essay entitled “Spiritual Gifts: Definitions and Kinds,” James F. Stitzinger explains these views.¹⁷ According to Stitzinger, one view, commonly referred to as the non-cessationist view,¹⁸ holds that all gifts are still operational to this day (permanent view). This is the view held by Classic Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement, and the Third Wave Movement.¹⁹ These groups differ with respect to the number of gifts they include as being operational today, with some having longer lists than others. A common element among them is that they usually place special emphasis on the gifts of tongues, prophetic utterance, and healing.²⁰

On the opposite side is the cessationist view, which holds that the miraculous gifts ceased with or soon after the ministry of the apostles, who were the exclusive recipients of these gifts (temporary view).²¹ Among the miraculous gifts seen as having ceased with the end of the apostolic era are: apostle, prophet, discernment, wisdom and knowledge, faith, miracles and healing, and tongues and tongue interpretation. Non-

¹⁷James F. Stitzinger, “Spiritual Gifts: Definitions and Kinds,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 143-149.

¹⁸This view is also known as continuationism.

¹⁹In his article (pages 145-148), Stitzinger gives a brief description of these three groups. He identifies Classic Pentecostalism as the movement that began in the early 1900s and emphasizes speaking in tongues and other supernatural signs and wonders. Represented in this group are The Assemblies of God, The Church of God in Christ, and the International church of the Foursquare. The Charismatic Movement or Neo-Pentecostalism, which began in the mid-1950s, is described as an emphasis on the Pentecostal experience that spread into non-Pentecostal churches. This movement has since spread to every major denomination and cuts across theological boundaries. The Third Wave Movement, also known as the “Signs and Wonders” Movement, is named such from the assumption that Pentecostalism was the first wave, Charismatic Renewal the second, and the “Signs and Wonders” Movement the third. This group is composed mainly of mainline evangelicals who did not want to be identified with either the Pentecostal or Charismatic movements, and yet believe in present-day manifestations of miraculous gifts such as speaking in tongues and healing.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 164.

²¹*Ibid.*, 148.

miraculous gifts such as evangelist, pastors and teachers, gifts of assistance, administration, exhortation, giving, and showing mercy are seen as being permanent and thus still functioning in the church today.²²

A study of the New Testament does not seem to give indication that miraculous gifts were restricted to the apostolic age. At the same time, Paul stresses the idea that gifts are given at the discretion of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:11), which implies that no human has a right to dictate at what periods in the history of the church these gifts will be manifested. Both sides need to avoid imposing their theological biases on the question of the presence and operation of the spiritual gifts. Cessationists risk dismissing as illegitimate some genuine manifestations of gifts of the Spirit, while the non-cessationists risk insisting on the presence of certain gifts in the church even at a time when the Holy Spirit may not choose to dispense such gifts. It is essential that the church remain open to manifestations of any gifts that the Holy Spirit chooses to bestow, while shunning the tendency to consider any specific gift as mandatory evidence of the Spirit's presence in the church or an individual's life.²³ There will still be need to guard against false claims of Holy Spirit manifestations. This can be done by following biblical guidance on proving the validity of such claims.²⁴ David Marshall, however, cautions that the church

²²Ibid., 165-175.

²³While this dissertation urges embracing and utilizing the gifts of all church members, it is not within its scope to address all the controversies related to types of spiritual gift manifestations, most particularly those of a miraculous nature. The primary concern of this dissertation is to urge the church to involve all its members in ministry according to the abilities and capabilities God has given them through the Holy Spirit. It is assumed that there are many ministries that can be implemented by making efforts to engage those gifts that are generally agreed upon by most believers to be present in the church. This author, however, urges tolerance, patience, and moving with caution when one or more members claim to possess gifts that many members view with doubt or suspicion.

²⁴For a scriptural study on how to test claims of Holy Spirit manifestations see the following: 1 John 4:1-3; Isa 8:20; Matt 7:15-20; 1 Thess 5:19-22; Deut 18:21, 22; Jer 28:9.

will need to avoid being so sidetracked by condemning the counterfeit gifts that it fails to make full use of the true gifts.²⁵

Spiritual Gifts and Natural Abilities

Some abilities listed as spiritual gifts in the New Testament are of such a supernatural nature that one would not normally expect to see them manifested in unbelievers. Gifts such as prophecy, miraculous healing and performance of wonders and miracles (1 Cor 12:9, 10) can be cited as examples. The New Testament also lists as gifts other abilities that would not be regarded as supernatural and that seem to function even among those who do not profess to have a relationship with God. This is true of gifts and abilities such as teaching, helping, and administration (1 Cor 12:28-30). Some use the word “talents” to refer to natural abilities that are given at birth and attempt to distinguish them from the abilities that are bestowed only on believers at their spiritual birth.²⁶

While there could be some validity to these distinctions, the whole discussion is not very beneficial from the perspective of Christian mission because God’s desire is to use every ability and capability in the church, irrespective of whether it was bestowed before or after one’s conversion to the Christian faith. At the same time, as has already been stated above, non-supernatural abilities which benefit the cause of God are also listed as gifts of the Spirit in the New Testament. As Max Turner observes, “Paul’s

²⁵David Marshall, “Talking About Gifts,” *Adventist Review*, May 8, 2003, 11.

²⁶Bruce Bugbee, *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 62.

solely from the Spirit (*pneuma*); *charismata* highlights the fact that they are entirely gratuitous, the effect of God's grace (*charis*)."³⁰

According to the New Testament, spiritual gifts are given to all believers, but not all believers are given the same gifts. Gifts are bestowed according to the discretion of the Holy Spirit. The gifts are given according to the needs of the church, to equip and empower it for the work of ministry (1 Cor 12:4-7, 11).

It is very important to stress the idea of ministry activities when discussing the subject of spiritual gifts. Gifts should not be seen as merely latent abilities given by the Spirit, but abilities given for the purpose of enhancing ministry. Emphasizing the importance of ministry activities rather than latent abilities, Kenneth Berding goes to the extent of rejecting the idea of defining *charismata* as spiritual gifts or Spirit-given abilities/endowments. He suggests that *charismata* be defined as "Spirit-given ministries," and argues that in all the passages that have commonly been referred to as giving lists of gifts (1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:11-13—and perhaps 1 Pet 4:10), the common theme that links these passages is the concept of Spirit-given ministry, and not merely the idea of a special ability given by the Spirit.³¹ While Berding's suggestion to discard completely the use of the expression "spiritual gifts" could be considered somewhat radical, his suggestion to focus on ministry activities is a call that needs to be taken seriously, for Paul does place his emphasis on ministering through the gifts rather than on the phenomena of simply possessing them.

³⁰Barbara E. Bowe, "Spiritual gifts," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (2000), 1249.

³¹Kenneth Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept in 'Spiritual Gifts': Have We Forgotten James Barr's Exhortations?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 1 (March 2000): 38, 39, 47.

From a study of the New Testament, one can glean invaluable principles about spiritual gifts and how God intended them to function in the early church as well as in the life and mission of the church today. The New Testament lays out the following principles and guidelines with respect to the functioning of spiritual gifts in the church:

Diversity of Gifts

In 1 Cor 12:4-6 Paul writes, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.” Paul wrote these words in addressing the conflict that was going on at the church in Corinth relating to spiritual gifts.³² Anthony C. Thiselton notes that there was a manner in which some at Corinth regarded their spiritual gifts as a status symbol and prided in them so much that they harbored an attitude that said about fellow believers who did not share the same gifts, “I have no need of you.”³³ The above statement by Paul was apparently an attempt to address this unfortunate state of affairs. As Paul S. Minear notes, Paul’s central attempt in this passage was to stress the oneness of the Spirit as the source of all gifts and the oneness of the church as the place where all these gifts were apportioned individually.³⁴

Commenting on the same passage, W. Larry Richards asserts that Paul’s statement is directed to some at Corinth who felt spiritually superior to their fellow church members because they spoke in tongues, and they apparently concluded that

³²For a broader context of the conflict at Corinth surrounding spiritual gifts read 1 Cor 12-14.

³³Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 900. Thiselton’s comments are based on Paul’s remarks in 1 Cor 12:21-26.

³⁴Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 190.

speaking in tongues was the only gift of the Spirit. Richards sees Paul's words as an attempt to call attention to the presence of other gifts in the church. He notes that Paul elevates the value of the other gifts by arguing that the gifts may be different, but they are all the working of one God, implying they cannot be in competition against each other if they have the same source. Richards also sees an indirect reference to the unity within the Trinity in 1 Cor 12:4-6 when Paul makes reference to the "same Spirit," "same Lord," and "same God" as being involved in the giving of different gifts, in different kinds of service, and in different forms of working. He concludes that Paul is calling for the same unity in diversity that exists among members of the Trinity to be present among the members of the church with their diverse gifts.³⁵

Theologians differ on whether to place the emphasis in 1 Cor 12 on unity or diversity. Thiselton argues in favor of an emphasis on unity, citing other theologians' works which highlight the text's emphasis on the unity of source of the gifts, unity of goal, and the unity of the community.³⁶ Gordon Fee however suggests that Paul's primary concern seems to be promoting diversity, since that seems to have been at the center of the controversy at the church in Corinth. According to Fee, the crux of Paul's argument seems to be; the body is one, but it has many members. He sums Paul's argument as follows,

Paul's primary concern with this imagery [of the body] is not that the body is one *even though* it has many members, thus arguing for their need for unity despite their diversity. Rather, his concern is expressed in v. 14, that even though the body is one,

³⁵W. Larry Richards, *1 Corinthians*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1997), 214.

³⁶Thiselton, 928.

it does not consist of one member but of many, thus arguing for their need for diversity, since they are in fact one body.³⁷

Whichever emphasis one prefers, it appears both unity and diversity are central themes in this chapter that cannot easily be considered one at the exclusion of the other. Paul is eager to see unity in the church, but he wants to make it clear that unity does not imply uniformity. As Richards puts it, “Each part of the body has an important function but cannot exist on its own. The body is unity in diversity.”³⁸

In 1 Cor 14:1 Paul urges his readers to “eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.” This injunction should not be seen as contradicting his earlier assertion that gifts are distributed according to the Spirit’s will and determination (1 Cor 12:11). Jesus portrays the Holy Spirit as a gift that is bestowed upon all the church. Nevertheless, the Bible says the Spirit can be poured more generously upon those who ask for the Spirit’s power in their lives (Luke 11:9-13). Similarly, as needs for specific gifts arise; God through the Holy Spirit will on occasion bestow such gifts as He sees fit in order to meet the needs of His church. In such cases, asking for the relevant gifts when the need for them is recognized is in order. Those who ask should however submit to the Spirit’s discretion with respect to what gifts will actually be bestowed at any given time.

Another question of interest concerns what Paul meant by “greater gifts” in 1 Cor 12:31 in which he counsels his readers, “But eagerly desire greater gifts.” This injunction seems to suggest a hierarchy of gifts, even though prior to this Paul seems to have been arguing against valuing some gifts above others. As one looks at the context of this

³⁷Fee, 601.

³⁸Richards, 207.

remark, it appears Paul is arguing in favor of gifts that have the potential to edify the church over and above those that are merely used to demonstrate one's giftedness without benefiting the body of Christ (see chapter 14). As J. Rodman Williams observes,

One spiritual gift may be greater than another because of its capacity to edify. All are equally gifts of the Holy Spirit and thus have intrinsically the same value. But since the gifts are community oriented and "for the common good," whatever gifts most build up the community are most greatly to be desired. Paul states this clearly in 1 Cor 14:12: "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church" (NIV). The greater gifts are clearly those that most edify the community of believers.³⁹

While some gifts may in this way rightly be regarded as greater than others from a functional perspective, Paul's central theme should be kept in mind, which is; while the body is one, it has many parts and it can only develop healthfully and function efficiently if all members are held in high regard and none are regarded as dispensable. The same message of unity in diversity along with cooperative interdependency is echoed in Rom 12:4-8 and Eph 4:4-6, 11, 12.

Unity in the Body of Christ

Along with trying to help the Corinthians embrace diversity, Paul also stresses the importance of unity as the environment within which ministry should occur. In 1 Cor 12:25 he reminds them that there should be no divisions among them as members of the body of Christ. Instead, as members of the one body, they should all have equal concern for one another. Millard J. Erickson sees in Paul's body analogy an emphasis on the interconnectedness between all believers who make up the church. He argues that there is no such thing as an isolated or solitary Christian life. There is mutual dependence of

³⁹J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and Christian Living* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 341.

each believer upon every other.⁴⁰ Robert A. Bryant says this oneness of body should engender cooperative interdependency if the church is to be healthy and successful in its ministry.⁴¹

Just as with the human body, so it should be with the church. With the body, if one part suffers, every part suffers, and if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (v. 26). Matthew Henry puts it this way, “As in the natural body the pain of the one part afflicts the whole, the ease and pleasure of one part affects the whole, so should Christians reckon themselves honoured in the honours of their fellow-Christians, and should suffer in their sufferings.”⁴² Members in the church should unite in uplifting one another. The success of one should be considered by all to be their own success as well. Members should not be competing among themselves to see who will be the most effective for God. Rather, they should combine their efforts and let their gifts complement each other so they can succeed together as a body. At the same time, when some members fail in their ministry attempts, they should not be derided or scorned, because their failure impacts the level of success of the whole church body. Thus when one fails, all have failed.

Gifts Given to All

In 1 Cor 12:6 Paul says about spiritual gifts, “God works all of them in *all* men,”

⁴⁰Erickson, 343.

⁴¹Robert A. Bryant, “Romans 12:1-8,” *Interpretation* 58, no. 3 (July 3, 2004): 289.

⁴²Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. VI (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1935), 570.

suggesting that all believers are given at least one gift (italics supplied).⁴³ In verse 7 he writes, “Now to *each* one the manifestation of the Spirit is given” (italics supplied).

Paul’s view is clearly that all believers have been given by the Spirit gifts with which to make a contribution in the life and work of the church. Tracie Moore sees in Paul’s epistles convincing evidence that every believer receives at least one gift. She writes,

That the indwelling of the Holy Spirit imparts to every Christian believer at least one gift appears both from Paul’s image of the body growing toward the full stature of Christ, its head, “when [and clearly only when] *each part* is working properly” (Eph 4:16), and his emphatic declaration: “To *each* is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7, cf. 11). It is plain that every-member ministry in the body of Christ is Paul’s, and therefore Christ’s own, ideal.⁴⁴

The ideal in church ministry is to utilize all the gifts available in the church. That entails seeking to involve all members in ministry activities for which they are gifted. Kirk and Rosie Farnsworth note with regret the method that many churches use to set up ministries and staff them. “The usual procedure is to choose the ministries and then to ask for volunteers to fill the positions. That’s backward! The better—and biblical—option is to identify the ministers first.”⁴⁵ They go on to argue that all of God’s people are called to ministry and the biblical model is for everyone to partner together in undertaking the ministry of the church.⁴⁶ Frank D. Macchia sums it up well when he writes, “What is needed is to broaden the concept of ministry so that all believers are

⁴³Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 243.

⁴⁴Tracie N. Moore, “Experiencing God’s Presents: Is Every Believer Guaranteed at Least One Spiritual Gift?” *Christianity Today*, August 2003, 55.

⁴⁵Kirk Farnsworth and Rosie Farnsworth, *All Churches Great and Small* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 71.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 73.

viewed as bearers of the Spirit who function uniquely as channels of God's grace to others."⁴⁷

Purpose of Gifts

The Bible makes it clear that Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of the church and not the individual who possesses them. As Mangal Man Maharjan notes, "Spiritual gifts are given for the good of the whole church. They are not given for individual enjoyment, but for corporate employment."⁴⁸ Paul says the gifts were given "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:12). Believers need to guard against seeking personal glory through the exercise of their gifts. Matthew Henry cautions, "Spiritual gifts are bestowed, that men may with them profit the church and promote Christianity. They are not given for show, but for service; not for pomp and ostentation, but for edification; not to magnify those that have them, but to edify others."⁴⁹

The idea that gifts are given for the common good of the whole church is emphasized in 1 Cor 12:7. It is a sign of failure and ignorance when credit and honor for accomplishments made in the course of the work of God are directed to individual participants and not to the church as a whole and to the Spirit who empowers the church.

⁴⁷Frank D Macchia, "Beyond Word & Sacrament: Rediscovering the Church's Charismatic Structure," *The Living Pulpit* 9, no. 4 (October–December 2000): 28.

⁴⁸Mangal Man Maharjan, *Equipping for Church Growth* (Dehli, India: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2002), 117.

⁴⁹Henry, 568.

No Gift Too Small to Count

In 1 Cor 12:21, 22, Paul uses the analogy of the body to illustrate that no one believer should see his or her gifts as being more valuable than those of others. Attention also needs to be called to verses 14-19, where Paul's words are apparently addressed to those believers who place a low estimation on themselves. Here Paul points out the futility of any part of the body abandoning its role because it does not feel as important as a different part of the body. In response to this argument, Paul says the part that appears more important cannot comprise the body on its own; it still needs the functions of the rest of the body in order for the body to remain viable. Clearly, this part of the argument is addressed to those who feel the church can function efficiently without their participation. Paul asks, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?" (v. 17).

Any member who withholds his or her participation in church operations or affairs leaves the church functioning in an impaired state. The church may be very energetic and active in some of its ministries, but it will not realize its full potential if some members withhold their participation. The church's potential can only be reached if all resources available through its members are tapped and utilized to contribute to its ministry. Rick Warren puts this point across well when he suggests the following principles for every-member ministry: (1) every believer is a minister, (2) every ministry is important; (3) we are dependent on each other.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 367-369.

None Expected to Use What They Do Not Have

After emphasizing the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit, Paul goes on to remind his readers that no one person had all the gifts. He asks a rhetorical question, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (1 Cor 12:29, 30). In Rom 12, Paul pursues the same theme:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (Rom 12:4-8).

In these verses, Paul raises an important issue with respect to the working of spiritual gifts. As Paul notes, not all body parts have the same function. People realize this about their bodies and as a result they do not under normal circumstances try to force their body parts to perform functions for which they were not made. One reason why some members are reluctant to be active in the ministry of the church today is probably because they are asked to participate in a capacity that is not compatible with their giftedness. In their book, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins say, “For too long the church has been trying to turn people into something they are not. And it only fuels their fears of inadequacy. How much better to go with the grain and transform who they *are* into ministry.”⁵¹

⁵¹Robert Lewis and Rob Wilkins, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 99.

Bruce Bugbee argues convincingly against asking people to perform ministries for which they are not gifted and which they do not have a passion for. He says, “The fact that each of us cares about something more than others is wonderful. Our various passions make it possible for different people to be involved in meeting many different needs.”⁵² He continues, “If we all cared about the same things, many of the needs in our world would go unmet.”⁵³

If more effort is put into helping people discover their gifts and then asking them to serve using those gifts, chances are more members will be willing to participate in the ministries of the church. This, in turn, will ensure greater success as such an approach places people in areas of ministry where they have the greatest chances to succeed.

Role of Pastors

In Eph 4:11, 12 it reads, “It was He [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Adventist church growth expert Russell Burrill points out that all the gifts listed in this passage are basically clergy gifts, and the purpose for which these gifts are given is to prepare God’s people for the work of ministry. He is critical of the King James Version’s rendition of verse 12, which reads, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, . . .” making it appear as if one of the jobs of the pastor is the work of ministry. Burrill argues in favor of the rendition in some newer versions of the Bible which do not put a comma

⁵²Bugbee, 30.

⁵³Ibid., 31.

after “saints” in verse 12, making it read, “for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry.” He concludes, “In other words, the role of the pastor would be to prepare the saints for their ministry. This text is not describing the pastor as a performer of ministry, but instead as a trainer of ministers.”⁵⁴ Commenting on the same passage, Dennis W. Bickers echoes Burrill’s view by noting that nearly all commentators now agree that the comma after the word “saints” should be eliminated.⁵⁵

Burrill is right in underscoring that ministry belongs to the whole church body, and not to the ministers alone. As Rex D. Edwards puts it, the pastor’s role is not merely to keep people with Christ, but rather to develop them for service both in and out of the church. Edwards concludes, “A pastor is the head of a ‘seminary,’ a training school for workers. The pastor is the dean, and the members are his colleagues in ministry.”⁵⁶

Ministers need to understand that they alone cannot finish or adequately perform the work of God; neither will the work flourish when only a few members are involved. The goal should be to give every member of the church a part to play in the mission of the church. As Russell Moy observes, Paul’s criterion of ministry is an approach that utilizes the spiritual gifts of the believers to provide a variety of ministries both inside and outside the church. Moy points out that Paul seems to promote this approach irrespective of the size of the church or the material resources available to it.⁵⁷ Thus

⁵⁴Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993), 47.

⁵⁵Dennis W. Bickers, *The Bivocational Pastor* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 115.

⁵⁶Rex D. Edwards, “Celebrating Uniqueness,” *Adventist Review*, October 19, 2006, 9.

⁵⁷Russell Moy, “The Loss and Recovery of Lay Ministry,” in *Equipping the Saints*, ed. Michael J Christensen (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 41.

tapping on the gifts of church members should not be dictated by inability to pay professional stuff. Instead, it should be done as a way of conforming to the ministry blueprint outlined in Scripture.

Indirect Contribution

In several accounts in the Gospels, Andrew is portrayed as one who brought people to Christ or facilitated their access to Him (John 1:40-42; 6:5-13; 12:20-22). While it was Andrew who brought his brother Peter to Christ, Peter grew to be more prominent than Andrew among the disciples (see Matt 10:2; Mark 9:2). The book of Acts further presents Peter as a leading figure in the early church (see Acts 1-12). From a human perspective, it is easy to recognize Peter as a strong voice for the cause of God and lose sight of Andrew's contribution. It is however important to realize that God often uses people of humble gifts such as Andrew to encourage others like Peter to realize their call to service.

Another story worth noting is the way Barnabas used his gift of encouragement. Barnabas' real name was Joseph (Acts 4:36). The apostles called him Barnabas, which means "Son of Encouragement," in apparent recognition of him possessing the gift of encouragement (cf. Acts 11:22-24; 14:21, 22). Barnabas accepted and nurtured both Paul and John Mark during times of their vulnerability until they each became established in their ministries (see Acts 9:27; 11:25, 26; 15:36-41; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11). Paul eventually grew to be a more renowned apostle than Barnabas, thanks in part to Barnabas' acceptance, encouragement, and affirmation of him. John B. Polhill says of Barnabas, "People like Barnabas are always needed in the church. They are the

peacemakers, the go-betweens who seek no glory for themselves but only seek to bring out the best in others.”⁵⁸

The church often gives great affirmation to individuals who exhibit extraordinary dynamism and charisma while paying less attention to members with less spectacular gifts. In so doing, it effectively sidelines some people who God has purposed to use as crucial pillars in His cause, even though the nature of their contribution may be indirect and less visible in public. Today the church has as part of its canon the writings of Paul and Mark, both of whom were nurtured and strengthened through Barnabas’ special gift of encouragement. The Christian canon also includes the writings of the Apostle Peter, who came to Jesus through the invitation of the lesser known Andrew. This underscores the fact that the church cannot afford to ignore the potential contribution of those members who possess gifts of a more humble nature.

Lay Ministry in the Early Church

It has already been established that God has given spiritual gifts to all believers as a means of equipping the church for its ministry. In order to establish the role of lay people in the church today, it is helpful to survey the role that lay people played in the early church and extract some principles that are applicable for today.

New Testament Teaching on Lay Involvement in Ministry

The word “layperson” in contemporary expression has come to refer to amateurs

⁵⁸John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 272.

or people who have no professional training or experience in a particular field.⁵⁹ It often carries the connotation of someone trying to do what he or she is not qualified to do. In the Christian church, the word is usually used to refer to church members who are not hired and/or ordained to full-time or part-time gospel ministry.⁶⁰ The word portrays such people as not being professionals in matters of faith and ministry and thus needing the professional services of a “spiritual expert,” that is, the clergy. While this dissertation will use the words “laity” and “clergy” in the contemporary sense, it will attempt to redirect the church to its New Testament church roots where the work of the gospel was the responsibility of every member.

No Disinction between Laity and Clergy

The word laity comes from the Greek word *laos*, which means “people,” usually used in the New Testament to refer to all the people of God.⁶¹ This word is used in Luke 2:32 to refer to the people of Israel. Paul uses the word *laos* to refer to the whole Christian community (Titus 2:14). In 1 Pet 2:9, 10, the apostle Peter uses this word to refer to Christian believers in general, and not just to the unordained members. W. R. F. Browning observes that while the present-day church uses the term laity to refer to members who are not ordained ministers, such distinction is not found in the New Testament. He notes that in the New Testament the word *laos* refers to the whole church

⁵⁹Gregory C. Carlson, “Laity,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (2001), 400.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “*laos*.”

or people of God, not to a segment of the church body.⁶²

George H. Williams points out that the expression “lay man” was not used during the days of the apostolic church. This expression was first used by Clement of Rome in AD 95. In a letter written to the church in Corinth, Clement, who was the presiding presbyter or proto-bishop of the Greek speaking church in Rome, used this term to refer to the non-ordained members of the church. In this he was borrowing from the general Greek usage of the term lay (*laikos*), which in secular usage was used to distinguish the mass of people from their leaders. In this way, Clement was adopting the secular usage of the term and giving it a Christian relevance. George Williams further notes that in the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament to Greek, this term had been used to distinguish the ordinary or profane from cultic usage and it had been used to refer only to things and not to persons. He observes that the use of the adjective *laikos* (common) in reference to people is foreign to both the Old and New Testaments.⁶³

William J. Rademacher confirms that the term *laikos* is missing in the New Testament. He explains,

In secular Greek the noun meant “layperson”; the adjective meant “common” or “profane,” as opposed to consecrated. Surprisingly, neither the Gospels nor the Pauline letters ever refer to a baptized Christian as a layperson. Paul uses the word *hagioi* to refer to the baptized. This word meant “holy,” “sacred.” *Hagioi* described the Christians as the new people of God, taking the place of the Old Testament people of God.⁶⁴

⁶²W. R. F. Browning, “Laity,” *A Dictionary of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 221.

⁶³George H. Williams, “The Ancient Church,” in *The Laymen in Christian History*, ed. Stephen C. Neill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 30.

⁶⁴William J. Rademacher, *Lay Ministry: A Theological, Spiritual, and Pastoral Handbook* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 41.

Gregory C. Carlson writes,

The exact term *laity* does not occur in the Bible. However; the word *laos* in the New Testament (occurring 140 times in the New Testament, eight of these in the plural) builds on the Old Testament idea of God's people being separate from the peoples of the world who do not know God. The missionary nature of making God known to the world is inherent in being God's people.⁶⁵

What can be deduced from reading the New Testament is that there was no distinction between the ordained and the unordained members of the church with respect to the call to serve God. R. Paul Stevens points out that the word clergy comes from the Greek word *kleros*, which is used to depict believers as God's chosen people or heirs of His inheritance. This word is used in Scripture to refer to the whole people of God and not only to church leaders (see Col 1:12; Eph 1:11; Gal 3:29). Stevens continues, "Ironically, the church in its constitution is a people without laity in the usual sense of the word, but full of clergy in the true sense of that word. . . . So the church does not "have" a minister; it is a ministry."⁶⁶ The New Testament church was evidently a lay movement in which non-clerical members were regarded as having a ministry to perform.

Support for Those in Ministry

The New Testament talks about support of those who did gospel work (1 Cor 3:13, 14; 1 Tim 5:18). This however should not be confused with the modern-day system whereby the church hires people and puts them on a salary. While there are accounts of certain individuals receiving support from fellow believers as they did gospel work, there appears to be no evidence of the church getting into a remuneration contract with those to

⁶⁵Carlson, "Laity," 400.

⁶⁶R. Paul Stevens, *The Equipper's Guide to Every-Member Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 5, 6.

whom it provided material support. Indeed the dynamics of modern day economics demand a more organized and systematic remuneration arrangement for those who do God's work full-time, but there is no precedence in the New Testament that those who are provided material or financial support by the believers become the ones to do all the work or ministry of the church.

Ordinary Members Participated in Ministry

The account in Acts 8 shows how persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem and all the believers except the apostles were scattered in Judea and Samaria. As these members spread out in flight of the persecution, they went about preaching wherever they went (Acts 8:1, 4). This is clear indication that in the early church, ordinary members viewed the preaching of the word and the whole gospel commission as the responsibility of all members and not just the apostles or church leaders.

Contribution of All Essential

To understand New Testament teaching on this subject, it is important to reflect once again on Paul's analogy of the human body (1 Cor 12:12-31). Believers are like members of one body, depending on the mutual functioning of each member for smooth operation and health of the whole body. In verses 29-30, Paul points out that there is no gift that has been given to all church members in any given setting, hence the need to rely on one another to build a healthy church and present a balanced and complete ministry. As Laurenti Magesa argues, Paul's central message in this passage is that as with the members of the human body, all members of the church possess equal dignity. No single

member or group of members can function well without others.⁶⁷

In Eph 4:16 Paul writes, "From [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Here Paul emphasizes the importance of every ligament lending its support to the functioning of the body and every part of the body doing its work. This statement is a direct call to every member to participate in the ministry of the church. As Tracie Moore observes, "The church is not to be like a bus, where passengers sit quietly and let someone else do the driving, but like an anthill, where everybody is at work."⁶⁸

Paul is not alone in his insistence that each member use his or her gift(s) in the context of church ministry or service. The apostle Peter also urges his readers to each use their gifts in service of others, and thereby prove themselves faithful stewards of God's grace (1 Pet 4:10, 11). This is an indication that Peter desired to see a gifts-based involvement by each believer in the ministry of the church.

R. Paul Stevens makes a strong appeal for involving the gifts of all members in ministry,

The truth has been underscored by the biblical teaching on spiritual gifts. The plurality, really the *pleroma* (fullness), of ministry gifts given to the body means that each member has a fraction of the ministry of Christ, like one color of the full spectrum comprising white light. Every color is needed to express the light of Christ to the world. It is ineffective for me as a pastor to function in a ministry for which God has not equipped me. And it is wrong for me to deny others the opportunity to exercise their gifts and ministry because I insist on doing it myself.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Laurenti Magesa, "Involving All in Ministry: A Challenge to the Church of the 3rd Millenium," *African Ecclesial Review* 42, no. 1-2 (February–April 2000): 7.

⁶⁸Moore, 55.

⁶⁹Stevens, 12.

Indeed the members may have limitations. Sometimes some in their uninformed zeal will do things that will embarrass the church, but the church needs to take comfort in Jesus' words recorded in Matt 16:18: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is important for church leadership to realize that Christ is the one who is in the process of building His church, and all human agents, be they clergy or laity, are but feeble instruments that Christ Himself uses to accomplish His mission.

Priesthood of All Believers

Prior to urging each believer to use his or her gift(s) for service, Peter evokes the principle of the priesthood of all believers. All followers of Christ, says Peter, become incorporated like living stones into a spiritual house, to serve as a holy priesthood to God (1 Pet 2:5).

The concept of the faithful of God being used as ambassadors for God on earth did not start in the New Testament. God declared to Abraham, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3). This promise was later expanded to include all Israel when God declared through Moses that He would make Israel a special kingdom of priests for Himself (Exod 19:5, 6). The phrase "kingdom of priests" alludes to the Old Testament priestly service of mediation. Just as God used Old Testament priests to mediate between him and the people of Israel, He wants to use modern-day Israel, the church, as an avenue through which He can reach out to all the peoples of the earth.

The gospel commission, as Peter declares, is directed at all believers (1 Pet 2:9). It is not directed to the apostles alone or in today's equivalence; to the ordained ministers alone. Cyril Eastwood puts it this way, "The pastor exercises a priesthood which all Christians possess. It is carried out not instead of the people but alongside them, with

them but not for them.”⁷⁰ As a result, it is not the church members’ role to assist the pastor in what they consider to be his or her job, that is, the work of ministry. Rather, it is the pastor’s role to assist the members in fulfilling their ministerial or priestly role.⁷¹

Examples of Lay Ministry in the Early Church

The New Testament gives evidence to the fact that ministry was practiced not just by ordained ministers but by many other members of the church as well. The following examples serve to illustrate how ordinary members participated in the work or ministry.

Preaching by the Displaced Believers

Reference has already been made earlier in this chapter to Acts 8:1-4, which gives an account of believers being persecuted in Jerusalem in a manner that resulted in them all (except the apostles) being scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. With the apostles left behind in Jerusalem, verse 4 says those who had been scattered (who were obviously lay people) preached the word wherever they went. Acts 11:19-21 gives an account of their progress as they went preaching in the different places they moved to. Verse 21 says, “The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”

⁷⁰Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962), 42.

⁷¹Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), 63.

The Apostles Were Not Professional Ministers

The reaction of the priests and scribes to the preaching of the disciples is informative with respect to the role of lay people in ministry. Hendrik Kraemer makes an insightful analysis of the situation regarding these first ministers of the gospel:

In Acts 4:13 it is quietly stated that the meeting of priests and scribes were astonished about the outspoken witness of Peter and John, the more so because they were uncultured (agramatoi) and common (idiotai) people. The Christian Church started its course through the witness and activity of “common” men. Observing that in the New Testament (cf. esp. 1 Cor 12) the “diakonia” or “ministry” (in the non-technical sense) was to such a great extent charismatic, we may confidently derive from it that apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, etc. (cf. Eph 4:11) were lay-people. Most of the companions of Paul were dedicated lay-people. Women as well as men were such “ministers” (cf. Acts 18:26; 21:9; Rom 16). The New Testament deals mainly with functions and vocations, not with “offices” as a rule. This implies a prominent role of lay-people in the life and witness of the church.⁷²

Kraemer brings out the important fact that in the New Testament, ministers were not hired in the manner in which they are today before they could engage in ministry; neither did they have to go through formal training. Anyone who had a living relationship with Jesus and as such had attended the school of Christ was qualified and well commissioned to participate in ministry.

Paul Was Self-Supporting

Though he was an apostle, Paul had a self-supporting ministry. He says in his farewell to the Ephesian elders, “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions” (Acts 20:34). Paul was a tentmaker by profession and he made tents to support himself in his ministry (Acts 18:3, 4). He did receive support from some churches, but this appears to have been at the

⁷²Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 19-20.

discretion of the givers who had no formal commitment to him and his fellow-workers (1 Cor 9:3-15; 2 Cor 11:8-9; 12:13).

Whatever support Paul received from believers in different churches seems to have only supplemented what he was already providing for his own living expenses and that of his associates. In today's terms, he was what would be termed a lay minister, as he was not on a remuneration package with the church.

Active Lay Participation in the Corinthian Church

There is not much mention of church office in the New Testament passages where the spiritual gifts are discussed. Paul's discussion about order during worship (1 Cor 14:26-33) seems to suggest that there were no specific people charged with the smooth running of the church program but all members participated whenever they felt the urge to use their specific gifts, hence resulting in some disorderliness in the Corinthian church.

In reading 1 Cor 14, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the negative way in which gifts were being exercised that one fails to see a strong positive aspect in the story. In verse 26 Paul says, "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation." The implication is that this was a church in which everyone participated actively. Paul himself commends them for this by saying in the last part of the same verse, "All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church." In the succeeding verses, what Paul rebukes the Corinthians for is not the exercising of their various gifts, but rather the lack of order and mutual respect with which this was being done.

The Prophetic Gift among Lay People

The New Testament records the presence and activities of people who had the gift of prophecy while they did not seem to hold any leadership positions in the church. This is an indication that there must have been some lay people in the early church who possessed the gift of prophecy and functioned in that role as God directed their ministry. The following are some examples:

1. *Prophets and Teachers at Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3)*: Included in this group was Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen. These prophets were used by the Holy Spirit to announce the call of Paul and Barnabas for a special work as missionaries.

2. *More Allusion to Prophetic Ministry in Corinth (1 Cor 11:4, 5; 14:29-31)*: Writing to the Corinthians, Paul gives instructions relating to men and women prophesying in the church, which strongly suggests this was an ongoing phenomenon among the ordinary members in that church.

3. *Daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9)*: Philip had four daughters who prophesied.

Other examples of people involved in lay ministry included the household of Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15-16), Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-4; Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 16:19), Appollos (Acts 18:24-28), and some members of the Thessalonian church (1 Thess 5:12, 13).

Other Biblical Insights on Spiritual Gifts

Besides the preceding passages covering the early church era, there are other scriptural passages as well that shed light on the subject of lay ministry and spiritual gifts.

Below is a brief survey of insights from other scriptural passages that have a bearing on this subject.

Divine Mandate

At the end of His ministry on earth, Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and spread the good news of salvation (Matt 28:19-20). It is significant that Jesus repeated His gospel commission in the context of the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). This leaves no doubt that the Spirit was bestowed upon the church for the purpose of equipping and empowering it as it sought to win the world to Christ.

In Matt 5:13-16 Jesus tells His followers that they are to be the salt of the earth and light of the world. Stated differently, Jesus was telling His disciples that whatever gifts they had were for the purpose of bringing transformation into the world around them. As the value of salt is realized not when it is in a container, but rather when it is applied to that which it is intended to season, so the presence of believers on earth serves no profitable value to God except as the believers extend their influence by mingling with and transforming those they come in contact with. In a similar way, no one lights a candle and puts it under a bowl. Believers' value as light is lost if they do not in any way enlighten those around them. Both salt and light are images that imply transformation of one's surroundings. These two metaphors serve to illustrate how important it is for all believers to serve as agents of change and transformation in the world.

Accountability

Through the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), Jesus makes it clear that God expects all believers to be involved in working for God. In today's world, this may take place in the context of workplace, home, church, community, or such other setting. The crucial point is for every believer to realize that he or she has been put on the face of the earth to fulfill a role in the great purposes of God, and everyone has been given some resources to use towards this end. Walter Douglas makes the following remarks about this parable, "I believe that Jesus in telling this story intended to prompt His listeners and later generations to think more deeply and more clearly about life as a gift from God, which is to be used at all times and in all places in service to humankind and to reflect His glory and advance His reign."⁷³

Douglas goes on to say, "Clearly the fundamental question in this story is not how many talents one has, but rather how one chooses to use what one has. Neither is the question what one *can* do, but rather what one *will* do."⁷⁴ There is a role for all believers to fulfill as God's ministers, and all are accountable to God for how they exercise this responsibility.

No Comparison among Believers

In the parable of the talents, each of the three servants was given one or more talents, according to their various abilities. The master's expectation for each was in accordance with the level of the servant's ability as well as the number of talents given.

⁷³Walter Douglas, "Vocation as Mission," in *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century*, ed. Jon L. Dybdahl (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 106.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 107.

The master expressed identical words of commendation to the servant who used five talents to earn an extra five as he did to the one who doubled his two talents to four: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matt 25:21, cf. 23). The implication in the story is that the master would have been equally satisfied if the servant with one talent had worked to double it to two talents. It may also be extracted from this parable that the master would probably not have been as happy if the servant who had the five talents had worked with less diligence and thus earned three extra talents instead of five. While these three additional talents would have been more than the two extra talents earned by the two-talent servant, they would have been below the potential of the five-talent servant.

One lesson that can be derived from this parable is that there is to be no comparison among believers with respect to how much they achieve in the course of serving God. Each will be judged according to the grace or gifts bestowed on him or her.

Not Alone

In giving the gospel commission to His disciples, Jesus promised, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:20). Those who endeavor to obey God by utilizing their gifts in ministry to Him are always assured of the Jesus’ accompanying presence through the Holy Spirit. It is incumbent upon those who would work for God not to proceed in their endeavors without asking and waiting for the leadership of the Holy Spirit. In an essay on reclaiming preaching as a spiritual gift, Joan Gray makes an important remark, “No matter how well you can translate Greek and Hebrew, how many good commentaries you read, how much exegetical study you do, or

how talented a speaker you are, people will not be transformed into the image of Christ unless the Spirit of God moves in the writing of the sermon and in the preaching event.”⁷⁵

As Jesus urged His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5, 8), today’s church should avoid venturing into God’s mission before submitting all its operations to the guidance, direction and empowering of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the disciples, they had been with Jesus in His work and been taught closely by Him for several years, and as such, one would assume they were well prepared for the task and challenges ahead. Though they had the unique experience of being both eye and ear witnesses of Christ’s ministry, yet He would not allow them to go out without the Holy Spirit. All their experience and exposure would not suffice in the absence of the Spirit.

Summary

What we have seen in the foregoing pages is that the work of God has been commissioned to all believers and not to the ordained ministers and other paid personnel alone. Christ expects each member to have a part in His service. The different spiritual gifts of the various members serve as the guide to determine what kind of ministry one can participate in. No select group of members can adequately do the work that has been commissioned to the whole church. None should feel they can do it without involving and valuing the contribution of others. None should feel like even if they withhold their participation, the work of God will not suffer any setbacks. Like the human body, the church will only function to its full potential when every member is involved in ministry.

⁷⁵Joan Gray, “Reclaiming Preaching as Spiritual Gift at the Approach of the New Millennium,” *Journal for Preachers* 23, no. 4 (Pentecost 2000): 17.

It is for this reason that the Scriptures call upon all Christian believers to use their various gifts to further God's cause.

CHAPTER 3

A SURVEY OF SOME CONTEMPORARY SUCCESS CASES RELATING TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND LAY MINISTRY IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In addressing the issue of success with respect to lay ministry, there is need to establish a clear understanding of what constitutes success. In any discussion of ministry, there often is the temptation to measure success with numbers. The size of a church and how fast it has grown is often used as a measure of success. While church growth is important and numbers are often one among other reasonable indicators of how much growth is taking place, it should be noted that numbers sometimes do not tell the full story and depending on how they are used, they can also be misleading. In light of this, while numbers will be used in this dissertation, the primary focus will not be on the numbers themselves, but on what impact the involvement of lay people in ministry can have on the overall growth and health of the church.

During the course of this research, many examples were found of how different churches are involving members in ministry. While it is unlikely that any church ever achieves 100 percent participation in ministry by its members, the intentional adoption of this ideal as an objective or goal is likely to ensure that such churches will have a much higher level of participation than those churches that do not emphasize the importance of such participation. It is the goal of this dissertation to encourage churches in Zimbabwe

to not just be satisfied with involving as many members as possible, but to have a conscious goal to help each member find a ministry opportunity in the church.

Essential Factors for Vibrant Gifts-based Lay Ministry

This research sought to find factors that have contributed to successful gifts-based ministry in some churches as well as in some individuals' lives. This chapter discusses examples of how such churches and individuals have established lay ministry based on the skills and gifts of the members. Some of these methods result in massive growth. Others do not necessarily lead to numerical growth but they strengthen the spiritual experience of those involved. They also enhance the ability of the church to retain members that are already in the church by addressing their needs through the various ministries. At the same time, such ministries sow seeds of the gospel in the hearts of members of the community, seeds that may later germinate and grow into full fruition with or without the knowledge of the church that ministered to them.

None of the examples discussed in this chapter will be relating to the work of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe. This is because the work of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe today will be discussed exclusively in the next chapter. This chapter will be limited to discussing what the Zimbabwean church can learn by observing other church entities, both Adventist and non-Adventist.

Education

A primary reason why many church members have not assumed their ministry responsibilities is that they are not well informed about the subject of lay ministry. If this trend is to change, there is need to engage in education of the members.

Education with respect to lay ministry takes two forms. First, there is the need to educate members theologically to raise their awareness of what God has endowed them with as well as God's expectations of them in the context of the great commission. Many members are not involved in ministry simply because they are not aware they have a role to play, or that they have a skill or gift that could benefit the church.

Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois has developed a highly regarded program on helping members discover their spiritual gifts and incorporating them into the ministry of the church.¹ Many other churches, ministries, and individuals have put together different versions of spiritual gifts inventory instruments and implementation programs. In June 2008 a Google search for the words "spiritual gifts inventory" yielded 3,850,000 results.² Some of these instruments are good and some are not so good. It appears to the author that the most reliable way of discovering spiritual gifts is to try participation in different ministries until one establishes an area of ministry where one is comfortable to take part. Some who could be good at preaching, teaching, conducting Bible studies, or leading in small group ministries may not discover their potential until they are invited to participate in some how-to training and allowed to try participation in various ministry activities.

Secondly, education should address the issue of seeking to help people realize the variety of opportunities that they have in ministry. Ron Ovitt, executive pastor of Calvary Church in Orland Park, Illinois and creator of the website www.layministry.com

¹See "Willow Creek Resources," www.willowcreek.org/resource.asp for a list of resources that Willow Creek Community Church has developed for implementation of a spiritual gifts-based lay ministry program. The site also lists other recommended resources besides those produced by the church (accessed June 19, 2008).

²Search for the words "spiritual gifts inventory" at www.google.com (accessed June 22, 2008).

is a strong proponent of this approach. In his church, Ovitt gives great emphasis to opportunities that are in ministry for every member.³

Ovitt points out that each person has hundreds of skills, many of which are taken for granted; skills which can be used to perform charitable work through charity organizations, churches and para-church organizations. Listing skills such as computer technology, accounting, office expertise, and vehicle maintenance as examples, he notes that many charity organizations, churches, and ministries cannot afford to hire people with these skills even though they need them to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Ovitt also suggests that other than volunteering one's skills to perform tasks related to a mission ministry, church, or charity project, church members can also reach out in sharing their skills through churches and ministries that offer tutoring or mentoring. Such ministry, Ovitt argues, has the potential of attracting to Christ people who would otherwise not go to church to listen to the preaching of the word.⁴

In his book *Healthy Christians Make a Healthy Church*, John H. Oak, pastor of the SaRang Community Church in Seoul, South Korea, writes about his experience from the founding of his church in 1978 with only nine members and the process that made it grow to where in 2003 the church had about 30,000 members. Oak credits the growth of his church to the fact that from the very beginning he made discipleship training the priority of his ministry by helping church members feel a sense of calling to participate in

³Ron Ovitt, *How Am I Wired?* (Palos Heights, IL: Gilgal Press, 2006), 35, 36, http://www.layministry.com/us/files/36326_12574.pdf (December 2, 2007).

⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

the mission of the church.⁵ Oak consistently met once a week with a group of ten people, offering them discipleship training. As the church grew, the number of discipleship training groups kept on increasing, so did the number of trainers. As of 2003, SaRang Community Church was a community of ministry where more than two thousand lay leaders, trained directly by their pastors, were working. Every year the church was training over 400 lay leaders.⁶

Oak argues that discipleship is not just a matter of converting unbelievers and making them members of the church. He insists that discipleship, as exemplified by Jesus, is a two-phase process that involves first changing individuals into becoming new people, and, second, sending them out into the world to reach out to others with the message of salvation. Oak also stresses that discipleship is a call that is extended to all believers. He writes,

The path of discipleship, which Jesus requires, includes all believers. It cannot be chosen according to whether you are mature or not. It is not for the devoted to submit and the not so inclined to forfeit. Although not all believers are requested to pay the same cost, once they come forward to believe in Jesus, He expects them to walk on the path to becoming His disciples. In Acts, we find that whether male or female, Jew, Samaritan, or even foreigner, and whether a leader or a lay person in the church, anyone who confesses Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior is called a disciple. This aligns with the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Therefore, the path of discipleship must be walked by all who believe in Jesus.⁷

In the foreword to John H. Oak's book, Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California writes,

⁵John H. Oak, *Healthy Christians Make a Healthy Church* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 25, 26.

⁶Ibid., 25, 26.

⁷Ibid., 132.

The starting point in leading members to maturity, ministry and mission is to invest time in teaching your members what the Bible says about these issues. You must lay the foundation. Teach it in classes, sermons, seminars, home cell groups, and every other way you can emphasize it. You should never stop teaching on the importance of every Christian having a ministry.⁸

Passion

In developing a lay ministry program, special attempt should be made to discover the passions of the different members. Ministry becomes a more positive venture if it is done in a manner that seeks to tap into the passions of the individual members, and to a great extent, one's passions are a reflection of the spiritual gifts that God has bestowed upon the individual.

Valerie N. Phillips, associate director of the women's residence hall at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, writes in an *Adventist Review* article about Ruth Roberts, a woman who lives in the community nearby to the university. Ruth has a passion for growing plants. She has turned her passion into a ministry by growing some African violets and donating them to the women's residence hall so they can be given to whoever desires to have one. Phillips relates an incident in which Ruth Roberts brought one small violet and said that she felt someone would need it. Not long after, a girl walked into Valerie Phillip's offices sobbing and decrying how lonely and depressed she was feeling. Looking at the plant Ruth had just brought, she wished aloud that she had brought a plant to make her room less lonely. Valerie thrust the plant into her hands and

⁸Rick Warren, foreword to *Healthy Christians Make a Healthy Church*, by John H. Oak (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 9, 10.

evangelistic campaign, some who would have otherwise felt comfortable or even enthusiastic about ministering in these alternative ways are left inactive and often made to feel guilty for failure to participate in these conventional ministries for which they are not gifted.

Eddy Hall tells the story of his own journey from a legalistic approach to ministry to a point where he came to minister in a manner that was in line with his giftedness and passion. He writes about how, like many Christians, he subscribed to a religion of “dos and don’ts” and for him true religion consisted of faithful observance of these prohibitions and imperatives. Here is how Hall describes his experience,

While I was growing up, my Christianity had consisted mainly of observing a list of dos and don’ts. Do go to church faithfully. Don’t steal or lie. Do read your Bible and pray every day. Don’t smoke or drink. Do pay your tithe. Don’t go to dances or movies. Do obey your parents. Don’t fight with your brother or sister. If I could just follow all the dos and refrain from the don’ts, I believed, then I would be a “good Christian.”¹²

Hall says while in high school he became aware of one thing on the list of dos that he was not doing, and that was witnessing. He writes, “The thought of trying to witness terrified me, probably mostly because I was so shy, but the thought of going to hell terrified me even more. Since I was convinced I had to witness to be a good Christian, I resolved to begin doing so.”¹³

Hall went on to college and continued to engage in ministry from this desire to satisfy God’s demands, even though he did not derive much satisfaction from it and he saw little evidence that his efforts were changing people’s lives. Change came to his life

¹²Eddy Hall and Gary Morsch, *The Lay Ministry Revolution: How You Can Join* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 28.

¹³*Ibid.*, 29.

while he was in college when his pastor's sermons led him to see God less as a critical judge and more as a loving father. Hall writes, "The more I experienced God's love, the clearer it became that I was not treating my witnessing prospects the way God treated me. I was treating them as objects, as trophies to be won, not as hurting people who needed to be loved."¹⁴

The realization that ministry involved more than just meeting spiritual needs eventually led him and his family to partner with two other families in starting a venture that shared the gospel in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods through ministries that responded to both their spiritual and social needs. They held backyard Bible schools, ran a shelter for the homeless, taught English as a second language, and started a prayer and Bible study group. This helped them establish relationships with these people and win their confidence in such a way that years later even people who passed their program and moved on continued to view them as their spiritual mentors.¹⁵

Hall's story is a reminder that ministry does not always consist of preaching the gospel or conducting Bible study. It is not every individual who has been gifted in this manner. The story also underscores that those who have not been gifted in preaching or giving Bible studies can find ways in which they have been gifted and through those they can engage in a ministry that is more effective and is in line with who God has made them to be.

¹⁴Ibid., 29.

¹⁵Ibid., 30.

Participation in Decision Making

For a lay ministry program to be successful, the members have to feel a sense of ownership towards it. For this reason, it is important to involve the members in the planning, implementation, as well as assessment of the program.

An important aspect of lay ministry is that individual members need to be involved in determining what they will do for ministry, be it as individuals, as groups or as a whole church. Following is a story about how First Church in Bethany, Oklahoma managed to organize a ministry through involving members at grassroots level in the setting up of the ministry.¹⁶

This church was challenged in 1989 by their pastor to seek ways of making a difference in their community. At the end of a “Fifty Day Spiritual Adventure” the pastor asked members to name some needs they saw in the community that they felt God was calling them to address. Suggestions were sorted into thirteen ministry areas. A bulletin list was prepared listing these areas, and members were encouraged to pick ministries in which they had the most interest and go to a specific room at a given time to meet with other people interested in participating in the same ministries.

Though this church had a long history of lay ministry, this time around the ministries were not set up by various committees and boards as used to happen in their other ministry ventures in the past. Lay people were let loose and encouraged to organize ministry groups at the grassroots level without having to be told how to operate. Church staff would eagerly support and encourage these groups, but ownership and leadership of the groups was left in the hands of those whom God had given the vision for these

¹⁶Ibid., 77-80.

ministries. Members were given considerable autonomy including the permission to fail. Some groups succeeded, some dissolved after some time, and yet some new ones were formed as time went on. This was a great way of letting ministry happen without church staff being involved at every turn.

In an interview in *Ministry* magazine, Baraka Muganda, General Conference Youth Director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, makes special emphasis on the need to involve the youth in the ministry of the church. He calls not only for their participation in ministry, but also involvement in the planning and decision-making process about the programs they get involved in. Muganda notes that some ideas that work well in one place will not succeed in another.

Referencing his experience with Adventist youth around the world, Muganda points out that in different parts of the world, young people have varying ways in which they want to participate. He notes that the youth in Africa, South America, Central America, the Philippines, and the South Pacific are powerful preachers and they love to share the word through preaching. In the western world (North America, Europe, and Australia), he notes that the youth there like to participate in evangelism but in their own way or style. They like participating in service projects, such as going overseas to build, providing water, working with Adventist Disaster and Relief Agency (ADRA), teaching English, and cleansing and sweeping streets.¹⁷ There is therefore need to observe what is working in other places with the objective to adopt winning strategies, while at the same

¹⁷Willie E. Hucks II and Paul Mwansa, "An Interview with the General Conference Youth Department Directors," *Ministry*, September 2007, 17. Muganda also shared in the interview that in December 2007 he was accompanying 2,000 young people to Taiwan who were going to work on service projects.

time adapting these ideas to what works locally in each situation. This can best be achieved through ongoing involvement of the participants at each step of the ministry program.

Strategies for Gifts-based Lay Ministry

Examples were also found highlighting strategies that some churches have used in setting up lay ministry that seeks to maximize membership involvement while meeting some needs in the community.

Needs-based Ministry

After studying the trends in some of the fastest growing churches in the U.S., George Barna concludes that the fastest growing churches or the ones that attract and retain the most members or attendees are those that, among other things, seek to meet the needs of their communities without undermining their theological beliefs.¹⁸ A church should aim to meet both the needs of its members as well as those of its community. By engaging in a needs-based ministry, the church opens the way for people with different gifts and talents to minister, since the needs in both the church and the community are so diverse that a diversity of gifts is needed in order to successfully minister to those needs.

Eddy Hall and Gary Morsh write about Newton First Church in Kansas. One time this church offered a class on lay ministry which opened the eyes of many members with respect to ministry opportunities present both in the church and in the community. Many came up with a variety of familiar projects such as care of the elderly, hospital visitation,

¹⁸George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 12.

and the like. One member however thought of something less conventional. He launched what he called the “Muscle Ministry.” Twelve to fifteen men in the congregation volunteered to this ministry and offered to be on call whenever there was a job requiring muscle power. When a need was presented, the group members contacted each other and they went to work. This group helped people move, did some work on the church grounds, cleared drains, and did some heavy yard work for elderly members.¹⁹

Maranatha Volunteers International is another example of an organization that mobilizes lay people to meet the needs of different communities. Specializing in building projects, Maranatha describes the impact of its mission as being two-fold; providing much needed building infrastructure while at the same time offering opportunities for ordinary people to make service a part of their lives.²⁰ In 2007, as one of its projects, the organization was working with the Adventist Church in Mozambique to provide urgently needed infrastructure in different parts of the country. A four-year, US\$30 million initiative was expected to result in the construction of 1,001 church buildings and eight schools across the country. The organization was also drilling a deepwater well near each newly-constructed church to supply water for use by the churches and residents of the surrounding villages.²¹

The Maranatha Volunteers International program is a good example of utilizing the diverse gifts of church members in a ministry that meets needs of both members of

¹⁹ Hall and Morsch, 83.

²⁰“What We Do,” Maranatha Volunteers International, http://www.maranatha.org/Template_Load.aspx?pageID=215 (accessed June 27, 2008).

²¹“Robbery at Maranatha-rented Warehouse Leaves Guard Dead,” Adventist News Network, January 3, 2008, <http://news.adventist.org/data/2008/1199388939/index.html.en> (accessed January 24, 2008).

the church and non-members. Such projects have a way of preaching to the community without a spoken word. They also make the spoken word more acceptable to the hearers as the church will have demonstrated the love of Christ first before asking people to accept the gospel. Ellen White says this approach of meeting people's needs before asking them to accept the gospel was the method of Jesus. She writes, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"²²

Along the lines that Maranatha Volunteers International operates, the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe can also consider mobilizing skilled people within the country to engage in such ministry. This would involve either opening a chapter of Maranatha Volunteers in the country or starting a new entity that operates along the philosophy and vision that Maranatha espouses. Local and international organizations and individuals who are financially privileged can be enlisted as partners in implementing such programs and projects.

One organization that has transformed itself into being both an international as well as local agency is the HisHands program overseen by the Adventist Volunteer Center, a department of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This program, which was first implemented in 2006, started as an endeavor whereby churches in developed nations would sponsor volunteers to undertake long-term

²²Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1942), 143.

missionary projects in foreign lands. Projects undertaken include providing basic needs, shelter, and infrastructure for the underprivileged in these foreign lands.²³

When the HisHands program was presented in Nigeria, Gideon C. Nwaogwugwu, president of the Eastern Nigeria Union Mission (ENUM), says that the union personnel felt they did not necessarily need international volunteers to implement the program. They started a program whereby Nigerian churches sponsored local HisHands volunteers to help with projects in their own country. They also enlisted volunteers who would be sponsored to go and preach or conduct Bible studies in areas that would have been identified as needing such help. As of January 2008, these local volunteers had made so much impact that 177 people were said to have been baptized as a result of projects undertaken by HisHands volunteers in Nigeria.²⁴ Implementation of similar projects in Zimbabwe can help meet the needs of various communities in the country while at the same time providing an avenue whereby members can participate in ministry.

Shared Ministry

For effective ministry to take place in a church, ministry should be a shared enterprise. This means that ministry is shared between ministers and members as well as members working together in specific ministries, each making a contribution reflective of his or her gift. In a small church, a pastor who does not share his or her ministry with the laity may become very intimate with the congregation, but this is a strong barrier to growth. C. Peter Wagner calls this the “shepherd mode” of pastoring. While he does not

²³Jill Walker Gonzalez, “Serving as God’s Hands,” *Adventist World*, North American Edition, January 2008, 34.

²⁴Ibid.

condemn it, he points out that it is not an approach that can produce and sustain growth in the church. For sustainable growth to take place, Wagner encourages the pastor to switch to a “ranger mode” whereby he or she ensures that the church is cared for through the many talented people in the congregation, while the pastor assumes a supervisory role to ensure that ministry is happening effectively.²⁵

One example of a church that Wagner says has successfully implemented the ranger approach to ministry is the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. This church, pastored by Robert H. Schuller, had about 10,000 members in 1984. In spite of its large numbers, Wagner states that in interviews conducted by his students at this and other churches in the area during the 1980s, one reason members gave for staying at the church was that it was “the friendliest church in Orange County.” Wagner notes that the Crystal Cathedral achieved this atmosphere of friendliness because the leadership officially commissioned about seven hundred lay people to be ministers who assumed pastoral duties and gave them appropriate training. They were each assigned ten to fifteen families for which they were responsible. They visited the sick and conducted pastoral visits as needed. Wagner notes that this willingness to share the pastoral ministry of the church with gifted lay people has resulted in this environment in which members feel a sense of belonging and satisfaction with the pastoral ministry they receive.²⁶

²⁵C. Peter Wagner, “Overcoming Small Church Barriers of 200 People,” in *The Everychurch Guide to Growth*, ed. Elmer Towns, C. Peter Wagner, and Thom S. Rainer (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 50.

²⁶C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth: The Secret of Pastor People Partnership in Dynamic Church Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 559, 560.

The Crystal Cathedral has continued to be a vibrant church and still boasts a congregation of over 10,000 members as of June 2008.²⁷ The church currently involves its members in twenty-three different ministries that benefit both the church members and the community at large. One of these ministries, the Volunteer Ministry, enjoys the services of 3,500 volunteers who serve at the church campus seven days a week as well as in the community.²⁸ According to the church's website, the mission of the Volunteer Ministry is to "call people to service, equip them to discover and use their spiritual gifts for God's work at our church and in the world."²⁹ This church seems to have mastered well the art of sharing ministry among its church members.

One brand of Christianity that has enjoyed tremendous growth across Africa in recent decades is the Pentecostal Movement. Other than the attractiveness of its claims to perform miraculous or faith healing and the appeal of its charismatic worship style, one factor that has contributed to the expansion of this movement is their ability to utilize lay people in the propagation of their message. Opoku Onyinah notes that in many countries in Africa, Pentecostals formed a network of Scripture unions through which they reach out to students and the students in turn reach out to their friends and fellow-students. Members are encouraged to reach out to others in unsophisticated ways, mostly through sharing personal testimonies of their experiences with Jesus. Onyinah notes that Pentecostals strongly emphasize the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and

²⁷"About this Ministry," www.crystalcathedral.org/about (accessed June 16, 2008).

²⁸"Ministries," www.crystalcathedral.org/ministries/index.php (accessed June 16, 2008).

²⁹"Volunteer Ministry," www.crystalcathedral.org/ministries/volunteer/index.php (accessed June 16, 2008).

therefore members have a high commitment in sharing the gospel with people they interact with at any given opportunity.³⁰

Lovemore Togarasei writes in an article about the Family of God, one of the Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe which was founded in 1980 under the leadership of Andrew Wutawunashe. By 2005, this church had 54 congregations across the country and had spread into several countries in Africa and beyond, with at least ten congregations in countries overseas.³¹ By 2008, the church was listing on its website 92 congregations located in 16 different countries around the world.³² Total membership is difficult to establish because the church does not keep membership registers at all its congregations.³³ Togarasei attributes the fast growth of this church to, among other things, its prosperity gospel, creative use of the mass media, belief in faith healing, as well as the mobilization of members into active soul winners. Members are encouraged to be missionaries to their families, friends, and colleagues at school and at work and they emphasize that each member of the church has a role to play as a missionary for God. Togarasei notes that there is so much emphasis in lay ministry that nearly every member has a role to play in the church.³⁴

Due to the members embracing this missionary mindset, many new congregations

³⁰Opoku Onyinah, "African Christianity in the Twenty-first Century," *Word and World* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 309, 310.

³¹Lovemore Togarasei, "Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon: The Case of the Family of God Church in Zimbabwe," *Exchange* 34, no. 4 (2005): 350.

³²"Worldwide Info: Churches," www.africanrevival.com (accessed June 22, 2008).

³³Togarasei, 356.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 357, 360.

have been opened in areas where members have moved to, either through the respective members own preaching, or through their facilitating for the church to conduct evangelistic campaigns in the areas they move to. Teachers have been instrumental in starting the church in the areas of the country where they work, and migrant labor has been responsible for the expansion of the church into other countries.³⁵

The example of the Pentecostal Movement in general and the Family of God in particular with respect to instilling in members a missionary identity is one that the Adventist church in Zimbabwe can learn from. It is notable that when people go on mission trips from one country to another, they are easily conferred the title “missionaries” even while they perform day-to-day service oriented tasks. Teachers who go abroad to teach non-religious courses are accorded missionary status if they go under the auspices of the church. The same designation is conferred on doctors, nurses, farming experts, electricians, mechanics, and other professionals when they take up foreign assignments through the church. Ironically, the Adventist Church in places like Zimbabwe and elsewhere does not seem eager to ascribe such titles to local nationals who perform similar tasks. What is needed in Zimbabwe is to help the local nationals who serve in these and other professions to see themselves as missionaries and to consciously think of how they can honor God or testify to God’s love and salvation in the context of their chosen professions.

³⁵Ibid., 357.

Formal and Informal Ministry

Some experts in the field of church ministry warn that every church needs to limit the number of projects or programs it undertakes to pursue at any given time. They argue that attempting to run too many programs can overstretch the church, especially if it is a small church with limited personnel or diversity of skills.³⁶ Ellen White counsels that church leadership should undertake “no more than they can do thoroughly, promptly, and well.”³⁷ This is indeed wise counsel. For some, this may seem to contradict the idea of involving every member in ministry according to their respective gifts. To the contrary, no such contradiction will be experienced if the issue is approached with open-mindedness and flexibility.

First, increased membership participation in ministry can be achieved through utilizing interested people in the ministries that are already operational in the church. For example, people who choose to participate in prayer bands can be assigned to pray for whatever program is running, so their membership and participation is not necessarily affected by what ministry the church is undertaking. People with the gift of hospitality can be utilized in welcoming and entertaining guests irrespective of what program is undertaken. Similarly those with the gift of leadership can be utilized in leading out in the programs of the church’s choice. At the same time, members can be involved in certain ministries either as individuals or as teams or groups at the grassroots level without formal involvement by church leadership. This works for example with

³⁶Barna, 49.

³⁷Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 5 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 415.

ministries involving hospitality, visitations of the sick, conducting Bible studies, and other such ministries.

If ministry is conducted in the manner proposed above, this will help overcome the perception in some members' minds that everyone who is not directly involved in a ministry at church is not doing his or her part in working for God. Participation should be seen as both formal and informal. This will also remove the pressure from leadership to try and achieve a 100 percent participation in the formal ministry programs arranged by the church. There should be recognition that those ministry activities not organized by the church can still be pursued by individuals who have the relevant gifts without direct oversight from the church.

Online Ministry

The church should think creatively with respect to what constitutes ministry. Today one of the greatest ways of reaching people is the media, and most especially the electronic media. There are opportunities of reaching out to both members and non-members using the Internet, television, and other such programs. There are people in the church who are very skilled or talented in the use of this kind of media. The church needs to co-opt these people and help them realize that they possess a skill that is highly valuable for ministry. The church should engage such people and find ways in which they can use their skills to reach out with the gospel through some form of media ministry.

In an article entitled, "Adventists Use YouTube Internet Videos to Share Message," Alexis A. Goring shares how some Seventh-day Adventists have adopted this avenue to share the gospel. YouTube is a website where Internet users who become

members of the service can visit www.youtube.com and upload, view, or share videos made both by professional and amateur producers. Goring points out that this media outlet, which only began in February 2005, has grown very popular around the world, especially with young people. He notes that YouTube has become the leading destination on the Internet for video entertainment. Many Adventists have realized the opportunity of utilizing YouTube and as of June 2007, if you typed the word, “Adventist” into YouTube’s search engine, results of 3,190 videos were listed.³⁸ This number has greatly increased since then. A similar search in June 2008 yielded 9,440 results.³⁹

In an article entitled, “Powered by the Holy Spirit,” that appeared in the *Adventist World-NAD* of January, 2008, Craig R. Jeffery introduces a new technology that he believes will make the Adventist message more accessible to millions around the world. He writes about The Adventist Channel, which is run by the Adventist Media Center. This is a channel that can be accessed on the Internet at www.theadventistchannel.org. It provides videos on demand twenty-four hours a day. Videos include devotionals, talk shows, music videos, Bible study programs, sermons, educational programs, children’s programs, mission stories, and a wide variety of quality Christian programming. While church members can benefit from watching these programs themselves, they can also reach out by sending a link to this website to their friends or loved ones. Both in person and on the phone, they can also tell their loved ones about this channel and in this way they would have contributed to the spreading of the gospel message, even if they would

³⁸Alexis A. Goring, “Adventists Use YouTube Internet Videos to Share Message,” *Adventist World*, North American Edition, September 2007, 6, 7.

³⁹Search for the word “Adventist” at www.youtube.com (accessed June 22, 2008).

not have been capable of standing up to preach. Jeffery writes, "I may not be able to take the gospel to the whole world by myself. I really can't preach or teach, but can I share a message. I can tell 20 or 30 or even 100 people about the Adventist Channel."⁴⁰

The above stories are indicative of the wide opportunities that are available today for members, especially young members who have a good mastery on technology, to use their skills and even their hobbies as a way of reaching out for Christ. While YouTube and the Adventist Channel are just two examples of online opportunities for ministry, there are also Internet services like My Space, Face Book, blogs and many others whereby individuals can use the Internet to share the gospel with people they would otherwise never have a face to face discussion with about their faith as well as people who would otherwise not respond to an invitation to come to church or attend an evangelistic campaign.⁴¹ There are many parts of Zimbabwe where such services will not be accessible or attractive. However, when trying to reach out to young urban dwellers, this is an avenue that by now may well be second to none in effectiveness.

While it can be argued that the Internet provides exposure to tons of information that one would consider inappropriate for believers, as more and more people turn to the Internet for information, entertainment, and communication, the church will greatly benefit if it can establish ways of utilizing the web to provide instantaneous contact with people surfing for information. This will also provide a healthy alternative for believers,

⁴⁰Craig R. Jeffery, "Powered by the Holy Spirit," *Adventist World*, North American Edition, January 2008, 33.

⁴¹In an article published in the *Adventist Review* issue of May, 2008, Stephanie Kinsey and Tyler Kraft note that after giants like Yahoo, YouTube, Windows Live and Google, MySpace.com has become the fifth most visited website on the Internet, followed by FaceBook.com at number 6, way ahead of well known giants like eBay.com, which is number 23, Wikipedia.com, which number 9, and Amazon.com, which stood at number 43.

who like everyone else, are increasingly turning to the Internet for information and entertainment.

In an attempt to highlight the diversity of ministry possibilities, care should be taken not to downplay aspects of ministry that are already working in a given place. In many parts of Africa, traditional evangelism still enjoys high levels of effectiveness. At the same time, lay members in these areas are very open to participating in ministry through preaching, as the shortage of pastors has created for them an opportunity to be regularly involved in preaching. The general population also still responds positively to this traditional method of receiving the gospel.

In an article published in the online *Advent News Network* newsletter in April 2001, Ray Dabrowski notes that the church in Africa has been enjoying tremendous growth in recent years, and cites Kenya as an example. Commenting on this growth, Peter Bwana, the then executive secretary for the Kenyan church, credited it to “the concerted effort of the laity and pastors in evangelism.” In the same article, Paul Muasya, who was then president of the Adventist Church in Kenya, commends the spirit of evangelism found among the laity in Kenya, and projects massive growth on the basis of this lay participation in ministry.⁴² For as long as this avenue of evangelism is effective in places like Kenya, Zimbabwe, or any other place around the globe, it should be utilized to the greatest possible extent, provided this is not done at the exclusion or neglect of other ministry avenues.

⁴²Ray Dabrowski, “Leaders Focus on Quality of Life in Kenya’s Dramatically Growing Church,” *Adventist News Network*, April 30, 2001, <http://news.adventist.org/data/2001/0988652500/index.html> (accessed May 28, 2008).

Balancing Inreach and Outreach

In the formulation of a ministry program by a church, it should always be remembered that the church is not a social club existing solely for the benefit of members. To the contrary, it primarily exists for the purpose of bringing in those who are outside of its walls and ensuring that they are nurtured to where they can become healthy members who in turn can go out and bring others into the church. The work of the church is therefore twofold; outreach and inreach,⁴³ and none of these two aspects of ministry can stand without the other.

The great commission (Matt 28:18-20) is about going into all the world to reach out to those who are not yet in the church. However, it is also about discipling new and old members into becoming like Christ. When this is achieved, the new members become mature and they are able to stay in the church. They are also capable of reaching out to others who have not yet come to know Christ.

The church needs to guard against two dangers. First there is the danger of focusing so much on inreach activities that are meant to meet the needs of members at the neglect of seeking to reach out to non-members. The second danger is that of focusing so much on outreach that there are no viable attempts to retain the members that have been won to Christ. Such an approach seems to display the faulty sense of ministry espoused by those who embrace it. It implies a desire to simply accumulate statistical data of how many have been reached with the gospel without displaying personal concern for the welfare of the people represented by those statistics. In the end, this approach is self-

⁴³Inreach refers to programs aimed at meeting the needs of members of the church while outreach refers to programs aimed at ministering to the needs of non-members. It is hoped that inreach programs will enhance membership retention while outreach will bring new members into the church.

defeating as it will most likely result in those people leaving the church and many times becoming harder to reach with the gospel a second time (see Heb 6:4, 5). This approach is also indicative of a faulty understanding of Christianity, as it fails to demonstrate the mutual love among believers that Jesus said would be a key factor in identifying His true disciples (John 13:35).

The Adventist Church should also avoid diluting its peculiar message of preparing the world for the second coming of Christ in an attempt to adopt popular methods of church growth. There is need to learn from and adopt some methods that other churches are using with success, while not abandoning the emphasis on building mature believers, an emphasis that has traditionally characterized the Adventist Church's approach to evangelism and church growth.

A report released by Willow Creek Community Church is very revealing in this regard. This report, which is the result of a three-year research that began in 2004, indicated that while the church had very good programs for "seekers"⁴⁴ and new believers, the programs were not good enough in helping older members deepen their relationship with God and attain Christian maturity.⁴⁵ Willow Creek conducted the same research in thirty other churches in varying geographic locations, sizes, and ethnic and denominational backgrounds and the same general pattern discovered at Willow Creek

⁴⁴"Seeker" is a term commonly used in church growth circles to refer to people who do not have a church affiliation, but visit a church to assess whether they will want to be members or regular attendees. Jerry Chip MacGregor describes "seeker services" as "worship services planned specifically to attract non-Christians." Jerry Chip MacGregor, "Seeker Services," *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (2001), 619, 620.

⁴⁵"Reveal: A Spiritual Growth Conversation," <http://revealnow.com/print.asp?storyid=23> (accessed May 26, 2008). For more information on the Willow Creek report see Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Resources, 2007).

emerged.⁴⁶ This is a clear indication that many churches are good at putting together programs that attract people into the church but often do not have enough programs to promote the maturity of those already in the church.

Summary

When properly organized and implemented, gifts-based lay ministry can contribute greatly to the life and health of the church. It makes it possible for the church to put together a rich and diverse ministry at little or no expense. The limited financial resources of the church are therefore made more available for use towards material, equipment, and other expenses that are not personnel related. Involving members in ministry will also enhance retention of members as it helps achieve in members a sense of ownership and belonging, while meeting the needs of those who are ministered to. When the ministries are gifts-based, this helps ensure that the opportunity for involvement is not the privilege and responsibility of a few members. Instead, opportunities are created for all interested members to be involved in ministry.

⁴⁶Matt Branaugh, "Willow Creek's 'Huge Shift,'" *Christianity Today*, May 15, 2008, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/june/5.13.html> (accessed May 26, 2008).

CHAPTER 4

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND LAY MINISTRY IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE TODAY

The Adventist Church in Zimbabwe has experienced remarkable growth since missionaries brought the Adventist message about 125 years ago. Much of this growth has been due to the church's ability to involve church members in the mission and ministry of the church. This chapter will explore the work that is happening in Zimbabwe today and seek to establish how the church employs the specific gifts of different members. The chapter will also analyze the strengths in current lay ministry practice as well as seek to identify areas where there is room for improvement or growth. Due to the limited availability of published materials on the progress of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe, this chapter greatly relies on telephone interviews the author conducted with current and former church leaders, pastors, and church members residing in Zimbabwe.

History

The Adventist message was brought to Zimbabwe in 1894 by a group of seven missionaries—four South Africans and three Americans.¹ An Adventist mission station

¹Virgil Robinson, *The Solusi Story* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1979), 16.

was established and a school opened at Solusi Mission in the Matebeleland region.² From Solusi, church work spread to other parts of the country mainly through establishment of schools which became a way of educating the local population while at the same time introducing the Adventist message to them and the surrounding communities. Lay people were enlisted into the ministry of the church primarily as teachers and pastors after they acquired basic education.

Starting with a handful of children that were enrolled as pupils at Solusi Mission, the work of the church has grown to where by December 2007 membership in Zimbabwe was posted on the official church website as 522,426.³ With Zimbabwe's population at about 13,349,000, this translates to one in every 26 people in the country being an Adventist.⁴ As of December 2006, the church had 944 churches and 2,198 companies in the country, being overseen by a total of 182 ministers.⁵ The territory of Zimbabwe has now become a union conference which oversees work in three conferences, the East Zimbabwe Conference, Central Zimbabwe Conference, and the West Zimbabwe Conference. Solusi Mission itself has grown to become a chartered university and across

²R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 225.

³"Zimbabwe Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* Online, December, 2007, <http://www.adventistyearbook.org> (accessed October 4, 2008).

⁴Ibid. According to the *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, Zimbabwe population in 2007 was estimated at 13,349,000.

⁵"World Church Statistics—Zimbabwe Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Church—World Church Statistics*, <http://www.adventiststatistics.org> (accessed September 1, 2008). The 182 figure is inclusive of those in administrative and departmental offices. The number is comprised of 96 ordained and 86 licensed ministers.

the three conferences there are 77 primary schools, 35 secondary schools, and 10 medical clinics.⁶

In a term paper that he wrote while a seminary student at Andrews University, Joel Musvosvi, who was privileged to listen to the accounts of some of the earliest Adventist converts in Zimbabwe, discusses the early years of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe. Musvosvi brings to light how, alongside the efforts of the early missionaries; there were many local people, both old and young, who in their small ways contributed to the growth and stability of the infant church in Zimbabwe. He highlights the hospitality of the local chiefs who welcomed the missionaries into their territories and encouraged them to open schools and teach the local population. Some risked their lives protecting mission property during a time in 1896 when the local Matebele tribe staged an uprising against the white colonialists, leading to the withdrawal of the white missionaries for safety to the city of Bulawayo for about five months.⁷

Joel Musvosvi notes that young African children who had learned English assisted as interpreters as the missionaries preached. Young children helped take care of one another when, during a famine that followed the 1896 tribal uprising, several parents handed their children over to the missionaries for fear of losing them to hunger. This became the beginning of a boarding school at Solusi, and many of the older children looked after the younger ones, making the work of the missionaries more manageable. Some of these children grew to become pastors, teachers, or were influential in other

⁶Robson D. Mazibisa, Zimbabwe Union Conference Year-end Report, Education Department, Zimbabwe Union Conference, December 2007.

⁷For more on the Matebele tribal rebellion against the British see Robinson, *The Solusi Story*, 41-52.

ways in the expansion and growth of the church in Zimbabwe either as church workers or lay people.⁸ This account clearly highlights the importance of utilizing the gifts and skills of all members of the church community for the benefit of the body of Christ, no matter how small their contribution may be.

Church Understanding of Spiritual Gifts and Lay Ministry

The Adventist Church in Zimbabwe, like the church in other parts of the world, subscribes to the belief in spiritual gifts as a basis for ministry function. This fundamental belief has led to the notable participation of members in the operations and ministry of the church that is witnessed today. The church's position is summarized in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, which refers to how God bestowed special gifts to individuals in both the Old and New Testament times as evidence that even today God still bestows special gifts upon members of His church.⁹ The teaching on spiritual gifts is generally used as a basis for encouraging members to be involved in the ministry of the church.

The understanding of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe about spiritual gifts and lay ministry is primarily along these traditional lines. The presence of a diversity of gifts is accepted. There is however a general resistance to the idea of "sign gifts,"¹⁰ and a

⁸Joel Musvosvi, "The Role of Africans in S.D.A. Work in Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe]" (a term paper for the course S.D.A. History, Andrews University, March 1977).

⁹Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Beliefs* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 65.

¹⁰"Sign gifts" is a term popularized by what has been called the "Signs and Wonders Movement," a movement among Christians that emphasizes the display of signs and miracles as evidence of God's presence and the authority or power He has given to His followers. The expression "sign gifts" refers to spiritual gifts that are of a miraculous nature; gifts such as healing, speaking in tongues, prophesying, and

wider acceptance of the less miracle-based gifts such as preaching, music, evangelism, leadership, hospitality, mercy, and other gifts that do not rely on miracle-based power. There is often an attempt to minimize the genuineness and sincerity of those who claim to have sign gifts such as speaking in tongues, healing, and other miracle gifts. This is most particularly true when, as is usually the case, such gifts are exercised by those who do not embrace all the teachings of the Bible as understood and taught by the church, a good example being the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath.

As noted in chapter two of this dissertation, an ongoing discussion on this topic has been to differentiate between spiritual gifts and talents. In the Bible the word talent was used more as a measure of money or wealth. Over the years it has come to denote people's natural abilities, be they abilities they have been born with or those that they have learned and developed. On the other hand, the word gifts has often, though not always, been associated with supernatural endowments. It is the view of the author that such distinctions are not important in addressing the subject matter under consideration in this dissertation. The mission of the church will be accomplished as the church utilizes the abilities invested among its members, irrespective of whether those abilities are viewed as natural or supernatural endowments.

It is encouraging to note that the church in Zimbabwe does not seem to devote a disproportionate amount of time to this debate. The church usually seeks to enlist people into areas of ministry where they can help accomplish its mission. In the process, not

the performance of other miracles and wonders. For more on the subject of signs and wonders as spiritual gifts see J. Gregory Lawson, "Signs and Wonders," *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (2001), 633.

much attention is given to the question of whether those people's abilities are being viewed as spiritual gifts, talents, or simply skills.

Current Practice in Mobilization and Management of Laity in Ministry

The Adventist Church in Zimbabwe encourages its members to participate in the ministry of the church. Among programs that are drawing attention are the following: Five Initiatives as outlined by the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), Personal Ministries, Voice of Prophecy, Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries, Prison Ministries, and HIV/AIDS Ministries.

Five Initiatives

Five Initiatives is a program that is being promoted by the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID)¹¹ as the guiding strategy utilized by the church in the division in implementing and coordinating all its programs and ministries. It should be noted that most of the programs being run by the church in Zimbabwe are adopted from programs proposed by the General Conference (GC)¹² and the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. The unions and conferences as well as the local churches do adopt the initiatives, goals, and guidelines set at these higher offices and come up with strategies

¹¹The Southern Africa Indian-Ocean Division is a regional office of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which serves as the office of the General Conference in the southern African countries and the island of Malagasy Republic. The Zimbabwe Union Conference falls under this division.

¹²The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the world head office of the church. Its offices are based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Decisions at the General Conference are undertaken through a quinquennial session attended by delegates representing all the constituencies around the world. In between sessions General Conference decisions are passed at the spring and autumn councils which are attended by church leaders from around the world. Minor business in between these gatherings is handled by an available members committee.

and programs to achieve the established goals and objectives. In light of this, the programs and strategies being run in Zimbabwe greatly resemble those being run in other unions or countries within the division. The Five Initiatives proposed by SID are summarized as follows,

Epaphras Ministry: A call to dynamic personal and corporate intercessory prayer, fasting, Bible study and intentional spiritual growth.

Paul's Method: A call to equip our members and employees with the knowledge and skills to lift up Christ and tell the world about him.

Zechariah Project: A call to the entire division family to become involved in evangelism, public and personal, each according to his or her spiritual gift.

Hezekiah Operations: A challenge to all institutions to become self-supporting through vibrant stewardship programs, regular auditing, strong internal control and good governance.

Haggai Venture: A dynamic infrastructural development initiative aimed at building churches, schools, e.t.c., throughout the SID.¹³

While this division strategy is broad as it is meant to guide all the operations of the church, it does have within it a call for all lay people to be involved in mission and for this involvement to happen in the context of the spiritual gifts of the individual members. The church in Zimbabwe has responded to this call and does have many church members involved in some form of ministry activity or other, as will be shown in the ensuing pages.

Personal Ministries

Personal Ministries is a very active department in Zimbabwe, coordinating the ministry ventures of other departments to ensure they all have an evangelistic thrust. Richard Sithole, the Executive Secretary of the Zimbabwe Union Conference, highlights the work that the Personal Ministries Department is doing. He notes that the department

¹³Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists, "Five Initiatives," <http://www.sidadventist.org> (accessed August 24, 2008).

conducts regular training for evangelism and provides certification for those who complete the training sessions. This has resulted in numerous evangelistic campaigns being conducted across the union by both pastors and lay people.¹⁴ Evangelism seems to be the central focus in the union and thousands of new souls are being baptized every year.

One program that has been very effective for evangelism in Zimbabwe, particularly in the Central Zimbabwe Conference, is the *Zunde* Movement. This movement originates from the traditional African custom whereby specific days were declared during which people from the whole village would go and work in the chief's field as part of their homage to him. In the *Zunde* Movement, members adopt the spirit of the *zunde* tradition and devote some days to work in "God's field," that is, doing evangelism that incorporates working in people's fields. During a *zunde* operation, members of the Adventist church from a specific geographical area gather in a village or center which has been targeted for evangelism. During hours of daylight they go into the homes and fields of non-members and invite them to a Bible study or witness to them. A few members conduct the Bible study or witnessing sessions while the rest are working in the fields. This way the people are able to have the Bible study or listen to what the Adventists have to share, while work in their field is not stalled. This practice augers well with the communal lifestyle that many Zimbabweans highly esteem. As a result, the individual being assisted is not likely to be offended by such overtures as they display an element of caring and selflessness rather than the idea of intrusion that a similar act would have in the western world. As they work in the fields and conduct Bible studies during

¹⁴Richard Sithole, telephone interview by author, July 9, 2008.

the day, the *zunde* members also invite the people they are assisting to attend evening sessions where evangelistic preaching will be conducted.

Having started in the Central Zimbabwe Conference in the 1980s, the *zunde* idea has grown in popularity and spread to other conferences. Jotham Manyakara, president of the Central Zimbabwe Conference, credits the *Zunde* Movement for the success that evangelism has had in his conference.¹⁵ This method of evangelism is commendable in that it provides some members with other ways to be involved in ministry besides preaching or conducting Bible studies. While those who are competent to preach and present Bible studies do so during *zunde*, others are able to participate in other ways such as simply working in the fields or helping with house chores.

Michael Ngwaru, Personal Ministries Director for the Zimbabwe Union Conference, says there are several spiritual gifts he sees at play among members in Zimbabwe today. He notes that church members are demonstrating their evangelistic gift as they go out preaching, witnessing, or participating in other evangelistic programs. Ngwaru also notes the presence of the gift of hospitality, as many members welcome evangelists into their homes and take care of all their living expenses while they conduct evangelistic campaigns or such other outreach programs. The gift of music is witnessed as Adventist singing groups appear regularly on national television singing gospel music, their songs are played on national radio, and they sing during evangelistic campaigns as well as at funeral gatherings. There is also the gift of helping, which has been displayed as various churches and individual church members assist at funerals as well as supplying some basic needs to the poor in their communities. Ngwaru goes on to cite what he calls

¹⁵Jotham Manyakara, telephone interview by author, September 5, 2008.

the gift of technology as people use the Internet, television, and even cell phones as instruments of evangelism and sharing of the gospel.¹⁶ In all these endeavors, Ngwaru celebrates the presence of the gift of leadership among the church members. He points out that in most church programs, pastors have delegated oversight of the work to the lay leadership and much work goes on without the direct supervision of pastors.

Ngwaru notes with concern that there have been times when the church came up with specific programs or ministry strategies and communicated an expectation that all members participate in those programs. He observes that while many of those programs have brought members into the church, there were times when this resulted in people being involved out of guilt as well as some ministering in ways that did not match their gifts. He notes that recently there has been a more accommodating approach that avoids being prescriptive, but casts the vision and challenges members to seek to accomplish it using whatever personnel and material resources are at their disposal. Ngwaru argues that where this approach has been used, it has liberated the members and he sees more and more people being involved in ministry in various ways, including some ways that he would never have personally conceived of.¹⁷

Table 1 is a breakdown of baptisms the Zimbabwe Union has reported over the past several years as a result of all the work being done to reach new people with the Adventist message.¹⁸

¹⁶Michael Ngwaru, telephone interview by author, September 7, 2008.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "World Church Statistics–Zimbabwe Union Conference." At the time when these statistics were accessed, the figures for the year 2007 were not yet posted.

Table 1. Membership Gains and Losses

Year	Baptisms	Dropped	Missing	Total Losses ¹⁹	Net Gains ²⁰
2006	34,270	1,743	5,794	7,537	26,733
2005	34,510	1,217	6,692	7,909	26,601
2004	64,271	1,671	2,862	4,533	59,738
2003	28,476	811	2,846	3,657	24,819

The above figures are clear evidence that there is a concerted effort among the pastors and the laity to reach out with the gospel and that the general population is receptive to the message. The same statistics however show a large number of losses as people either abandon their faith or go missing. This shows that there is constant need to strengthen other ministries that focus on nurturing and meeting the needs of members who are already in the church.²¹ One way this can be done is by helping those who have gifts that are relevant to the task of retaining members to realize the importance of their gifts and essentiality of their contribution to the mission and stability of the church.

In line with *Paul's Method Initiative* adopted by the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, the Zimbabwe Union Conference is involved in ongoing training of members for personal ministry. Evans Muvhuti, the union president, reported in June

¹⁹These losses are derived by adding missing and dropped members. This does not include losses incurred through membership transfers and death.

²⁰These net gains reflect the difference between baptisms and members lost through either going missing or being dropped out of membership for apostasy. Membership changes caused by death, transfer, and profession of faith were not factored in as these do not usually reflect on the effectiveness of the church's ministry.

²¹"World Church Statistics–Zimbabwe Union Conference."

2008 that the union had appointed a pastor at the union level to oversee the training programs in the country. The training targets both pastors and lay people, and also involves training what are called “Trainers of Trainers” who are to be responsible for training people in their local churches or districts for ministry. This program, Muvhuti continued, had enjoyed significant success particularly in training members on how to minister to people in HIV/AIDS situations.²²

Voice of Prophecy

Other than evangelistic campaigns, one aspect of evangelism that has gained much traction in Zimbabwe is the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) correspondence school program. The union has sought to establish every local church into a Voice of Prophecy college, whereby each church identifies potential new VOP students, recruits them into the Bible study program, distributes lessons to the enrolled students, collects them for grading, and distributes them back with the subsequent lessons. Each local church department is encouraged to enroll people in the VOP Bible lessons as they (the departments) conduct their programs such as Sabbath School, family life seminars, youth functions, pathfinder clubs, small groups, and the like.²³

The program is also used for “inreach” to old members as they are encouraged to sign up for courses such as the Daniel and Revelation series. These courses have the effect of deepening the faith and understanding of members that are already in the church. Maisva notes that the VOP program has opened doors for ministry participation

²²Evans Muvhuti, “Five Initiatives Make their Way in SID – Zimbabwe Union,” *Adventist Echo*, June 2008, 7.

²³Earnest Maisva, telephone interview by author, July 8, 2008.

to church members of various talents and skills as some serve as recruiters for new students, some as graders for the lessons and some serve to deliver lessons to enrolled students.²⁴ Due to the constant contact that VOP students have with church members during the course of their study, it becomes easier for them to transition into becoming regular church attendees as they will have established some acquaintance or relationship with one or more members in the church. As such, they are not strangers when they choose to attend the church regularly or to be baptized.²⁵

Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI)

One arm of the church that has become very active in Zimbabwe is the Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI). Taking their inspiration from the Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries²⁶ in North America, Adventist business people in Zimbabwe have organized themselves to coordinate their efforts in supporting the work of the church. Beginning in 1994 with the formation of the Adventist Lay Services Association (ALSA), lay professionals and business people in the country rallied themselves to explore ways they could participate in and support the work of the church. They sponsored projects such as evangelistic campaigns in "unentered areas,"²⁷ distribution of clothing to the poor, and at one time organized a huge gospel music rally

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶For more information of Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries in North America see <http://www.asiministries.org>.

²⁷"Unentered area" is an expression Adventists use to refer to places that have not been reached with the Adventist message.

that attracted national attention and was attended by high ranging political dignitaries and civic leaders as well as people from all walks of life. According to Desire M. Sibanda, a former chairman of the organization, ALSA was a significant step in enlisting lay people to serve according to their gifts as well as channeling their resources towards the spreading of the gospel.²⁸

ALSA was succeeded in 2006 by the opening of a chapter of Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) in Zimbabwe. ASI became a much stronger organization and it set as its objectives to promote and strengthen businesses run by Adventists and mobilize material support for evangelism, development of church institutions and infrastructure, as well as the general operation of the church in the country. Luxon Zembe, current president of ASI Zimbabwe, singles out mobilizing resources to support evangelism within Zimbabwe and beyond as a central objective of the organization.²⁹ This organization has sponsored evangelistic efforts in areas prioritized by the conferences and also sponsored lay pastors to nurture new members in areas where the church had been newly established. ASI has funded developmental projects such as church buildings as well as assisting in welfare projects.³⁰ As noted above, today Zimbabwe has a vibrant Voice of Prophecy (VOP) correspondence school program. The entire VOP program is currently sponsored by ASI and does not draw funds from the Zimbabwe Union Conference budget.³¹

²⁸Desire M. Sibanda, telephone interview by author, June 29, 2008.

²⁹Luxon Zembe, telephone interview by author, July 6, 2008.

³⁰Sibanda.

³¹Evans Muvhuti, telephone interview by author, July 6, 2008.

Through ASI, business people have also found an avenue to reach out to fellow-business people through arranging business breakfasts and running business seminars to which they invite their non-Adventist business acquaintances. They also invite these non-Adventists to partner with them in sponsoring some community projects undertaken by the church. Through this homogeneous³² interaction, business people have been able to reach out to their colleagues, be it through inviting them to church functions, registering them for VOP, through friendship evangelism or other witnessing methods. Jotham Manyakara, president of the Central Zimbabwe Conference, notes that this program has generated a lot of good will for the church in the business community as well as resulted in some business people joining the church.³³

Zimbabwe is currently undergoing an economic meltdown with an unemployment rate of 80%; an inflation rate that was 165,000% in February 2008,³⁴ was 2,234,000% in May, and 11,250,000% by June of the same year,³⁵ making it by far the highest in the world. The effect of this has been that the average church member has been squeezed to a point where their financial contribution to the church has become insignificant.

Through ASI, business people have assumed a greater role in church support as their

³²According to the homogeneous unit principle propounded by church growth expert Donald A. McGavran, humans tend to show a predisposition to gravitate towards those of their own kind. Thus it is easier to win people to Christ if the message is brought to them by those with whom they have something in common. For more on the homogenous unit principle see Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans, 1990).

³³Manyakara.

³⁴"Zimbabwe Inflation Hits 165,000%," BBC News, April 16, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/ft/-/2/hi/business/7351086.stm> (accessed July 9, 2008).

³⁵"Zimbabwe Inflation Rockets Higher," BBC New, August 19, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/ft/-/2/hi/business/7569894.stm> (accessed August 19, 2008).

incomes are much more likely to rise with inflation compared to those of the average members. While many of these business people may not be preachers by inclination or gifting, this is a time when their gifts of giving, mercy, and helps have become very crucial.

According to Evans Muvhuti, Zimbabwe Union Conference president, in mid 2008 the union had taken an action to allow pastors and other workers in its territory to take a leave of absence for periods of up to six months to fend for themselves through personal projects or other business or professional ventures. This was because both the union and the conferences were not able to pay the workers a livable wage or make their wages keep up with inflation. The General Conference and the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division stepped in with some assistance to bail the union out. In addition, ASI undertook to make monthly contributions to the union to supplement the tithe income available for pastors. These contributions were then distributed to the three conferences using a formula determined by the union.³⁶

While ASI has captured attention because of the magnitude of the financial contributions the organization is channeling to the church, Jonathan Nzuma, president of the East Zimbabwe conference, notes that not all funding that the church receives from lay people comes through ASI. There are other members who are making financial contributions to sponsor projects directly at their local churches or in their districts without channeling them through ASI. The work of the church is therefore benefiting from both the formal contributions through ASI as well as these individual contributions

³⁶Muvhuti, interview.

that may not be well documented beyond the churches or districts where they take place.³⁷

Prison Ministry

One notable project that ASI has been involved in is the installation of satellite television in prisons. This program started as a venture pursued by the Women's Ministries Department in the Golden Stairs District of Harare. Prisoners in Zimbabwe are not normally afforded the luxury to watch television, but the women were able to negotiate with prison authorities for permission to install satellite TV in prisons and air the Adventist sponsored Hope Channel as a community service aimed at transforming the lives of the inmates.³⁸ With this arrangement, Hope Channel became the only television channel available to inmates in the prisons in which these TVs have been installed. The channel, which was vetted by prison authorities, brings to prisoners themes of repentance, forgiveness, and hope for a brighter future. This program has since spread to other cities and conferences. By June 2008 four prisons in the country were airing the Hope Channel and four other prisons were lined up for installation during the same year. The program is set to continue, with television installations in more prisons. Donations have been

³⁷Jonathan Nzuma, telephone interview by author, August 28, 2008.

³⁸Zimbabwe does not have strict laws establishing separation between church and state which would render such an arrangement subject to negative scrutiny. Instead, the state and the churches have many joint projects and the government looks at churches as partners in national development. For example, the government pays salaries of teachers in church run schools and the same schools receive developmental grants from the government.

flowing from ASI, individual business people, corporations, and other donor organizations.³⁹

In addition to the television programs, lay people in Zimbabwe are sponsoring skills training in prisons through donating tools and equipment needed for such programs. Other activities of the Prison Ministry include visits to prisons by church members, donation of spiritual literature, and conducting of Voice of Prophecy Bible study programs. The ministry also donates academic textbooks and stationery to support young prisoners wishing to continue their education. This program is availed especially to younger offenders. The ministry has been able to maintain contact with some young people who have been released from prison and helped them continue with their education, pursue professional training, and even assisted them in finding employment.⁴⁰

HIV/AIDS Ministry

Zimbabwe is among the countries that have the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world, with about 15.3 percent of the adult population infected, according to the United Nations 2007 statistics.⁴¹ The Zimbabwe Union is coordinating training of members on how to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic by ministering to affected people in their community. It also helps set up support groups whereby those that are infected with HIV or affected in other ways by the pandemic can get together for mutual

³⁹Zimbabwe Prison Ministries Executive Committee, working Document for the Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministries in Zimbabwe, 2008, Prison Ministries Department, Zimbabwe Union Conference, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹UNAIDS, "2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic: HIV and AIDS Estimates and Data, 2007 and 2001," Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, http://unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/2008/2008_Global (accessed September 4, 2008).

support. To help curtail the spread of AIDS, the church periodically conducts seminars aimed at teaching people how to avoid contracting HIV. The church has also trained youth peer educators who speak to their age-mates about the benefits of abstaining from sex before marriage.⁴²

According to Dennias S. Chihwai who spearheaded the Adventist Aids Ministry in Zimbabwe, the church today helps train care givers on how to provide care to their loved ones. It helps both the sick people and their loved ones establish self-help projects to provide a livelihood for themselves as they may have lost their jobs due to the illness. The church also works with donor agencies to connect these individuals with material resources they may need. It mobilizes resources from church agencies such as Adventist Disaster and Relief Agency (ADRA) to provide food and clothing to the sick and their families as well as assisting those who cannot support themselves due to the death of a breadwinner. The church helps pay fees for orphans. Resources are gathered and distributed both formally through church organs as well as by individual church members who have heeded the call to assist.⁴³

In the execution of such an active ministry, many people are given the opportunity to use their gifts for ministry. The AIDS ministry outlined above involves work by counselors, educators, trainers, support group coordinators, nurses, spiritual support givers, grief support givers, financial donors, and those who assist in meeting other day-to-day needs.

⁴²Muvhuti, interview.

⁴³Dennias S. Chihwai, telephone interview by author, July 9, 2008.

Other Departments

The ventures stated above are not the only areas in which people are involved in ministry. Gilbert Dube, Personal Ministries Director for West Zimbabwe Conference, notes that the church involves both Adventist and non-Adventist professionals in programs such as health screening and stop smoking programs. Dube also notes that the church has been involved in “clean the city” campaigns where members go and clean dirty streets in town; “adopt a clinic/hospital” campaign where members find the needs of a clinic or hospital and work with the facility’s management to supply identified needs and to visit the sick. This has attracted new converts not only among the recipients of such services, but also among non-members who have been invited by the church to participate in delivering such services in the community.⁴⁴

While each department of the church comes up with programs of its own, in Zimbabwe, just like other parts of the SID, evangelism is a central focus of all departments. The SID website clearly underscored the centrality of evangelism in all departments of the church. In an article entitled, “Year of Mega Evangelism,”⁴⁵ the website points out that 2008 was declared the year of mega evangelism and outlines strategies that are proposed to realize this objective. This article calls on all departments to be involved in evangelism in the course of their ministry and challenges each department to come up with evangelistic campaigns at the departmental level and engage in other soul winning programs of their choice.

⁴⁴Gilbert Dube, telephone interview by author, September 1, 2008.

⁴⁵Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division, “Year of Mega Evangelism,” March 19, 2008, <http://www.sidadventist.org> (accessed August 24, 2008).

Evans Muvhuti, president of the Zimbabwe Union Conference, notes that evangelism has been a central focus of the church for successive years, with different themes being adopted each year, but all aimed at boosting evangelism in the territory. Other than 2008 being the year of Mega-Evangelism, he points out that the year 2006 was the year of Small Groups and 2007 was the year of Personal Evangelism.

Muvhuti is quick to stress that the introduction of a new theme each year did not imply the abandoning of a previous strategy, but rather an addition to what had been learned in the preceding year. The small groups focus was to have members train each other in the context of small groups to reach out to non-members. The personal evangelism theme was meant to encourage members to utilize the skills they were gaining from their small groups for evangelistic outreach. The mega-evangelism theme seeks to combine the efforts of different departments and individuals all for the purpose of reaching out to non-members.⁴⁶

Lay Ministry at the Local Church

Other than the involvement in the evangelistic thrust of the church highlighted above, lay people in Zimbabwe are greatly involved in the day-to-day functioning of the church. It has already been noted that Zimbabwe has an Adventist membership of 522,426⁴⁷ that is spread around 944 churches and 2198 companies with the churches being overseen by 182 pastors.⁴⁸ Of the 182 pastors, 27 are serving either as

⁴⁶Muvhuti, interview.

⁴⁷"Zimbabwe Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* Online.

⁴⁸"World Church Statistics–Zimbabwe Union Conference." The 182 figure is inclusive of those in administrative and departmental offices. The number is comprised of 96 ordained and 86 licensed ministers.

administrators or departmental directors at union and conference levels, which leaves only 155 pastors directly responsible for churches.⁴⁹ This translates to each pastor overseeing an average of 6 churches and 14 companies, and a pastor to membership ratio of 1:3,370.

These statistics show that it is impossible for the pastor in Zimbabwe today to have direct impact on the members on a regular basis. Based on the author's recollection, which was confirmed in a recent telephone interview with Michael Ngwaru, Personal Ministries Director for the Zimbabwe Union Conference, the church predominantly relies on the leadership and ministry of lay people for its weekly services.⁵⁰ A typical Sabbath service in Zimbabwe begins with a Sabbath School program presided over by a Sabbath School superintendent who is a lay person. During Sabbath School other lay people participate in tasks such as leading music, teaching Sabbath School classes, deacons and ushers welcoming people and helping them find a place to sit. Other members participate by presenting mission reports, serving as Sabbath School secretaries, leading out in prayer, and some minister through presenting music either as solo or in groups. Ngwaru notes that Sabbath School serves as a ministry training ground for young people as children are assigned slots to recite memory verses, present speeches, and present music before the church.⁵¹

⁴⁹The information about the workers based in offices was obtained from the following four sources from the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* Online (accessed October 4, 2008), "Central Zimbabwe Conference," "East Zimbabwe Conference," "West Zimbabwe Conference," "Zimbabwe Union Conference."

⁵⁰Michael Ngwaru, telephone interview by author, October 5, 2008.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

During the worship service, the preacher is usually a lay person who may or may not be an elder at the church. Other lay people lead out in music, prayer, and any other items on the worship program. Most churches also have a prayer band which meets each Sabbath at a designated time to pray for the church as a whole and any special needs of individual members brought to their attention.

Churches in Zimbabwe usually have a morning and afternoon service. The afternoon service is devoted either to Bible study or to departments of the church. During the afternoon sessions, adults and young people meet separately, and lay people usually lead out in these afternoon sessions, except on the rare days when the local pastor or a visiting pastor may be present.

Vespers and mid-week prayer meetings are usually held in people's homes. The church members are divided into several geographical zones and they meet for vespers and mid-week prayer meetings at a home close to their own place of residence. It is in the zonal gatherings that new preachers are given a chance to preach and those who are seen to be gifted preachers end up being on the roster of preachers for the Sabbath worship service. They may also be asked to lead out in future evangelistic campaigns. Thus these zonal meetings also serve as a training ground for preaching and other forms of ministry. The zonal meetings are also used as an avenue of extending grief ministry to those who lose loved ones, as the members often gather at homes of grieving fellow-members to provide grief support.

Local elders are responsible for convening church board meetings, and in most churches, these meet in the absence of the pastors. The pastors try to stay in touch with the elders so there is coordination of the ministry vision across the pastor's district.

Pastors in city areas are likely to be more present at their churches as their congregations tend to be fewer but larger, while those in rural areas find it more difficult to regularly visit every church, as their churches tend to be smaller, but greater in number and spread across a wider geographical area.

Lay ministry therefore happens every Sabbath and during the week in the context of church life. Members elected to leadership offices are usually the ones who coordinate these ministry activities and they seek to involve other members in the implementation.

Strengths in Current Practice

There are several things commendable about the lay ministry program in Zimbabwe as it stands today. Following are some positive observations about the lay ministry program.

Spiritual Gifts Considered in Church Election Process

In conducting church elections, it is assumed that people are appointed to offices for which they are gifted. While the process is not always smooth or efficient, the church will not normally elect someone to any office for which they know him or her to be unqualified or incompetent. What the church in Zimbabwe will need is a more reliable process of discovering people's gifts, so that people are not assumed to have gifts that in reality they do not have. Even so, it is commendable that the issue of people's gifts or abilities is taken into consideration in electing them to church office.

Diversity of Ministries

A look at the church activities outlined in this chapter indicates that the church has come up with diverse ways in which people can serve and participate in the ministry

of the church. It has been pointed out that many members are currently participating in evangelism. This includes the participation of preachers, musicians, ushers, those who invite guests to the meetings, those who provide funding for programs, and many others who contribute in other ways that touch and influence any guests who come to listen to the preaching of the word.

The VOP program has also been mentioned and how it affords members to participate as recruiters for new students, graders, or distributors of the lessons. It has been mentioned how there are various community projects and how professionals from different fields are given an opportunity to minister according to their skills and gifting. The diversity of ministries being undertaken provides a range of opportunities through which members can participate in the life and ministry of the church and this is a positive development. Paying more attention to the gifts of each member could result in more alternative ways to minister. However, the current level of ministry diversity is a step in the right direction.

Training

The church runs ministry training programs for its pastors and lay members. Training is beneficial in that it helps improve the skills of those who are already talented in certain areas while at the same time giving others the courage to try new ways of ministering that they may not have tried before. Without training, even some who are gifted in certain ways may make blunders as they try to engage in ministries with which they have little experience. In a survey conducted among Adventist Zimbabweans who are now living in the United States of America, 37 percent said while in Zimbabwe their

ability to minister had been strengthened by training that was offered through departments of the church.⁵²

Evangelistic Thrust

It has been noted that the church in Zimbabwe has a great focus on evangelism. This is the primary reason for the church's existence and as such it is appropriate to keep it front and center. Church members need to constantly be reminded that the church is not merely a fellowship club where friends meet and socialize and guard their closeness by avoiding the entrance of unwanted outsiders. As the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5:13-16), the church must not fail to have an evangelistic impact among those in its community. If it does, it has lost the main purpose for its existence.

Lay Empowerment

In the many ministries that have been referenced in this chapter, the participation of the laity is more visible than that of the clergy. One reason for this is that pastors in Zimbabwe oversee many churches; therefore, the members have to implement and manage church programs without much direct involvement of the pastor. Lay empowerment has helped the church in Zimbabwe to function without having to rely on the presence and input of the pastor at every turn. The work of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe would not be where it is today without the contribution of the church members in the mission and operation of the church.

⁵²See appendix A for survey questions.

Deficiencies in Current Practice

Having noted the strengths of the lay ministry program in Zimbabwe, it is appropriate to note areas in which the efficiency and effectiveness of this ministry could be improved. The following are some areas that the church would do well to address if it wishes to move towards realizing its full potential in ministry:

Focus on Programs Rather Than Spiritual Gifts

At many levels of the church in Zimbabwe, there is a strong focus on programs that sometimes comes at the expense of spiritual gifts. When this approach is taken and a program succeeds with only the participation of a few members, large numbers of members may be left uninvolved because the program is seen as succeeding without their involvement. While it is good for the church to come up with programs that chart its mission focus and strategy, such programs should be determined by an inventory of the gifts or abilities available in the church. This would be a better approach than to simply choose a program and then try to find suitable personnel to implement it. Such an approach is flawed in that it will seek to utilize only the gifts needed for the programs put together by the church. As a result, gifts unrelated to these programs will be left unnoticed and therefore unutilized. With this approach, there is also a tendency to pile up responsibilities on a few conspicuous individuals at the exclusion of many potential participants as no adequate effort is made to establish ways in which all members can be a part of the church's ministry.

A survey was recently conducted among Zimbabweans living in the United States in which they were asked to assess their personal experience regarding the way ministry

is done in Zimbabwe.⁵³ Out of 72 respondents who completed the survey, 28 percent said they had in the past been asked to serve in ministry capacities for which they did not feel gifted. Thirty-five percent said they felt their spiritual gifts/talents or skills were not being utilized in a ministry activity at their church. Forty-six percent said there were ways in which they wished to be involved in ministry, but that were not facilitated by their church.⁵⁴ What these responses seem to indicate is that there are many in Zimbabwe who have been enlisted into ministry activities for which they do not feel gifted. It is encouraging that there are many members (46% in this survey) who feel they have something to offer in the area of ministry even though they have not been invited to use their gifts. A ministry approach that deliberately focuses on the gifts of these people will ensure greater effectiveness as well as a higher level of participation in ministry.

From the author's experience and observation, there is no systematic approach in Zimbabwe today to help church members discover their gifts. No such program was reported in the interviews the author conducted with church leaders in Zimbabwe. Promoting spiritual gifts discovery programs could be a way the church can highlight awareness among members of the diversity of what they and their fellow church members can do for God as well as help them discover their own spiritual gifts.

Prescriptive Approach to Ministry

Sometimes church leadership in Zimbabwe, both at local and at higher church

⁵³A similar survey was sent to Zimbabwe but results were not easy to get given the prevailing economic situation that made movement too costly and impractical.

⁵⁴See appendix A for the survey questions.

levels, has attempted to prescribe to individuals how they all should participate in ministry. This has the potential of having members end up participating in certain ministries out of guilt even when they are not gifted for such ministries. While growing up and later while serving as a pastor in Zimbabwe, the author recalls hearing messages from church leaders aimed at having all members participate in certain methods of evangelism or join certain ministries that were set up by the church. Many times these appeals came without consideration of the gifts of the individuals being enlisted and how they fitted them for the ministries in question.

During this research, the author took note of a statement on the website of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division which was written with reference to the “year of mega evangelism” theme for 2008. Referring to people in health ministries the statement read,

Every hospital and each clinic in the region is encouraged to do one institutional evangelistic campaign in 2008. Aside from this, each medical doctor and chaplain employed in the hospital is also requested to do a personal evangelistic campaign. All health ministries directors of the local church, conference, association, federation and at the Union level are also encouraged to do evangelism.⁵⁵

While the author does not doubt the ability of many health professionals to function as preachers, it appears that making a blanket statement that requests every doctor to conduct an evangelistic campaign may exert unnecessary pressure on some doctors who would otherwise function better by presenting a health talk during a campaign than being the preachers themselves. Perhaps it would be well to take into account Paul’s admonition that we are all members of one body but we each have different functions (Rom 12:4-8). One should also consider the possibility that the doctor

⁵⁵Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division, “Year of Mega Evangelism.”

may be better at singing or giving Bible studies than he or she is at preaching. A better approach would be to promote evangelism while leaving room for individuals to participate in ways that they are most comfortable with.

Outreach Versus Inreach

Sometimes church leadership has focused on evangelism so much to the neglect of nurturing the people who are already in the church. The large figures of people being dropped out of the church record books in Zimbabwe every year testifies to the weakness in the area of membership retention.⁵⁶ Many pastors and church members rejoice to see new members come into the church, but those who leave often do so unnoticed. Indeed the church has many programs that are prepared for members who are already in the church and it is hoped that these programs will meet their needs and strengthen their commitment to the church. However the emphasis given to the task of keeping members in the church is far less than that given to bringing them in. A look at the complete text of the article on mega evangelism referenced above shows how much detail it has about bringing new members into the church and how it is just about silent on how to keep those members in the church.⁵⁷ At the same time, church members who have gifts that could minister to the needs of those who are already in the church are sometimes not taught to appreciate the importance of making their gifts available for use in the edification of their fellow church members.

⁵⁶For more on membership losses in Zimbabwe see, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "World Church Statistics—Zimbabwe Union Conference."

⁵⁷Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division, "Year of Mega Evangelism."

Unequal Regard for Gifts

While the church in Zimbabwe does teach that all members have gifts through which they can serve God and his church, often some gifts are regarded more highly than others. For example, in an evangelist campaign many gifts are used. These include music, prayer or intercession, service, hospitality, preaching, leadership, and administration. However, when there is an evangelistic campaign the church has traditionally placed more recognition and affirmation on the preacher than on all the other players. The spotlight is so much focused on the preacher that people being involved in other ways often yearn to “grow” to a point where they too will be able to preach. Similarly, the average church member has a higher regard for the church elder than for a Pathfinder director or Sabbath School teacher. Deacons are perceived as having a higher calling than janitors, and so the list goes on. It is God’s desire that every believer be highly valued for his or her personal worth and that all gifts be regarded as being important for the proper functioning of the church body as is the case with members of the human body (1 Cor 12:14-30).

It is commendable that the church in Zimbabwe has a diversity of ministries in operation. However, unless all members are convinced of the importance of their own gifts and how essential they are in God’s cause, many will be contented to play a secondary role while those perceived as having superior gifts are left to do the bulk of the work.

In Zimbabwe today, there is a danger that because of the large financial contributions that the business community is making, they may end up receiving greater affirmation from the church than those who give less money. As a result, those who have

less to contribute may be left looking upon their own contribution as insignificant and thus lose motivation to give or minister according to their ability.

Simbarashe Musvosvi, former lecturer at Solusi University tells of an incident where he was invited to conduct an evangelistic campaign in a certain area in Zimbabwe. The hosting church did not meet his costs, but one of the church members had him as his guest for the duration of the campaign and took responsibility for feeding and providing him with accommodation.⁵⁸ No money was spent on any materials. The campaign was a low cost venture that was made possible through the contribution of one member who was willing to use his gift of hospitality. Such a contribution may not compare in size to the regular donations that the business people make through ASI, yet it is a meaningful contribution that is within the capability of many members. Asking all members to look inward and think of how they can contribute will encourage people to be creative and come up with their own ways of making a contribution, even though that contribution may not compare to that being made by others in the church.

Summary

This research found that lay people in Zimbabwe are involved in church work to an extent that has resulted in faster growth and enabled the church to thrive despite having a few pastors to oversee the work of ministry across the country. Many programs are currently in place, with lay people being involved through funding, planning, and execution of various ministry ventures. In spite of the financial distress that the country as a whole, and the church in particular, is going through, the church in Zimbabwe has

⁵⁸Simbarashe Musvosvi, telephone interview by author, July 6, 2008.

done amazing well. It is suggested, however, that the church make an intentional effort to increase the number of people participating in ministry by aiming to involve every member in some form of ministry. This will not be achieved by simply encouraging everyone to participate in a few select programs that the church undertakes to sponsor. Instead, this is best achieved by engaging in a diversity of ministries to give people wider options of how they can be involved. Further, within those diverse ministries, options should be available for people to choose how to participate.

Beyond providing a diversity of ministries, the church in Zimbabwe should focus more on helping individual members discover their spiritual gifts or ways in which they are best suited to serve. Along with this, an environment should be created where there is room for all to serve who wish to do so. This will imply having members involved either formally in programs arranged by the church, or informally in ministries of their own choice that are not overseen by their congregational leadership. The goal should be to have every member involved in ministry and to have them involved according to their respective areas of giftedness.

CHAPTER 5

MOBILIZATION FOR GIFTS-BASED LAY MINISTRY:

AN ACTION PLAN

Many ideas have been discussed concerning what would constitute a biblical approach to the subject of lay ministry in the context of spiritual gifts. As leaders of the church in Zimbabwe today work with the members to spread the message of salvation, it is essential that they follow God's blueprint on how this ministry is to be executed. This chapter will present an action plan to be used in implementing a gifts-based lay ministry program in Zimbabwe. The goal will be to structure the program in a way that complies with scriptural guidance as expounded in this dissertation. Appendix C is an essential accompaniment to this chapter as it provides a training manual for use in the execution of this program.

Biblical Imperative

When Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and evangelize the world, He instructed them not to go out in their own strength. Instead, He commanded that they wait in Jerusalem until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5). He concluded by saying, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The church must never lose sight of the relevance and essentiality of the presence of the Holy Spirit in all its undertakings. When the promised Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as they gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost, the infant church was empowered in a manner that resulted in rapid growth. The Spirit gave the disciples courage and boldness and bestowed upon the believers a diversity of gifts that equipped the church for its ministry. It is only as the Holy Spirit is allowed to stay in charge that the work of the church can result in true success and growth.

In addition to submitting to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, there is need for the church to open up the work of ministry to all believers. Church leadership should communicate to all members that there is room for them to participate in the ministry of the church. As members are recruited into ministry, an environment should be created whereby their participation is based on their gifts or skills. None should be made to feel guilty for not participating in a specific ministry of the church, particularly if that individual is already involved in other types of ministry in the church. This does not mean that members will be encouraged to shun participation in any ministry for which they are not specially gifted. Members can be encouraged to participate in the various ministries of the church. However, if this is done in a manner that is mindful of their gifts, no undue pressure will be put on them to meet specific expectations. At the same time, they will be encouraged to place more emphasis on ministry activities that match their gifts.

Implementation

The author intends to use this dissertation as a framework upon which to build a lay ministry program in Zimbabwe. In implementing this program, the author will seek

to educate church leadership, facilitate coordination of a program with local leadership, and establish a pilot program that can serve as a model for what will be done in other churches as the program expands.

Education

As an instrument to help churches implement the proposed lay ministry programs, a manual for training church leaders has been prepared and is included in this dissertation as appendix C. The author intends to use this manual in training pastors and local leaders on this subject. They, in turn, will be encouraged to use the same manual in educating church members and overseeing the implementation of this program in their churches. The title of this manual will be *Manual for Mobilization of Spiritual Gifts in Lay Ministry: A Training Guide for Church Leaders*.

The manual is structured to function as an instruction guide for a five-day seminar. The idea is to present these seminars to pastors during conference workers' retreats. Conferences in Zimbabwe usually arrange annual workers' retreats that run for about a week and guest presenters are invited to these gatherings. Such gatherings will be a fitting setting for sharing these concepts with pastors. In turn, the pastors will be encouraged to train their elders and any other individuals who show potential as trainers. These individuals will then go into the local churches and share these lessons with the general membership.

Recruiting

Following the seminar presentations to the general membership by the elders or other competent members, the churches will be encouraged to recruit members into

ministries of the members' choice. This process is to be overseen by the pastors and local church leaders. The members' choices will be based either on a spiritual gifts inventory test that they will have taken, or they can base their decision upon their personal assessment of their abilities and passions for ministry. Those not sure about their gifts will be encouraged to try different ministries over a period of time without making permanent commitments to be assigned to those ministries until they feel they have determined their ministry preference.

Coordination

While these proposed seminars are aimed at helping members discover their gifts and encouraging them to participate in ministry, the manual does not provide detailed training for various ministries in the church. These seminars are not intended to provide such department or ministry specific training. There are already many training programs going on in the churches which are department specific and the seminar presentation proposed in this dissertation will not try to duplicate such programs. Rather, the author will encourage seminar presenters to network with those presenting department specific seminars so that the training can be presented concurrently.

Instead of just having trainers train members and expect the members to find their way into ministry, the author will encourage pastors to facilitate coordination between those who present these seminars and local church departmental directors so the local directors can enlist members who will have attended the seminars into ministries of their choice. Throughout the course of the year, there will need to be constant consultation between church leadership and these departmental leaders to ensure smoothness in the way people are enlisted into ministry. The author will also facilitate such coordination by

engaging conference departmental directors to encourage them to promote this concept of departmental directors at the local church enlisting new ministry volunteers into their various departmental ministries.

When members have chosen areas of ministry in which they wish to serve, church departments will be encouraged to provide appropriate training for those wishing to participate in the departments' respective ministries. This training does not always have to be through organized seminars. Rather, it can be hands-on learning as new volunteers are assigned to work alongside those who are more experienced in certain ministries. Departments will also be encouraged to exercise flexibility in their ministry programs to enable those who want to try participation in specific ministries to do so without undertaking long-term commitments to be involved in those ministries. This will be an important provision necessary to create an environment friendly to those who are seeking to discover their gifts and choose a ministry preference.

Not all ministries will be done under the sponsorship and supervision of the church. The training manual does encourage members to also engage in any ministries of their choice in their communities, be it as members of a church team or as individuals. Such ministry endeavors may not fall under the direct oversight of the church, but church leadership is encouraged to keep track of any such ministry activities so as to give appropriate acknowledgement and encouragement to those involved.

Pilot Program

As part of the broader strategy for implementing the gifts-based lay ministry program, the author intends to initially work with pastors in one city, preferably the city of Harare, which is in the author's home conference. The author will conduct a one-week

seminar for the Harare pastors, after which they will be encouraged to go and implement this program in their churches. They will be expected to train a group of trainers from their districts, who in turn will train their fellow members. The pastors will be expected to constantly supervise the implementation of the program. The author will continue to be available on a consultancy basis for the churches running this program. Monthly meetings will be arranged with the participating pastors to periodically assess the progress of the program in each district. Input received this way will become a basis upon which constant improvement of the action plan and the training manual can be effected.

The benefit of the pilot program is that it provides a setting where the author can place focused attention and help make the program work rather than spreading himself too thin across the conference in a manner that may reduce effectiveness. When the pilot program becomes well established, the author intends to expand the program by introducing it in other cities and gradually at conference and union levels.

Evaluation

Two types of evaluation for this program will be undertaken. First, there will be an evaluation for the seminar presented to the pastors. An evaluation questionnaire for this purpose is attached in appendix B (form entitled, "Gifts-based Lay Ministry Seminar-Evaluation Form"). The purpose of this evaluation will be to measure the effectiveness of the training seminars conducted by the author to pastors. The pastors, in turn, will be encouraged to administer this same evaluation when they present these seminars to their church leaders. Feedback from attendees will be used to improve both the content of the manual and the style of presentation.

After six months from the date of implementing the program in churches, an evaluation will be conducted in churches to measure its effectiveness. Appendix B provides an evaluation questionnaire for this purpose (form entitled, "Gifts-based Lay Ministry Evaluation Form"). Feedback from this evaluation will be used to evaluate the success of the churches in implementing this program. To this end, it will seek to establish whether there is an increase in the number of people involved in ministry and what fraction of the church is involved in ministry compared to the total membership of the church. This evaluation will also assess the general satisfaction of the membership with the ministry program and try to determine if those serving in ministries are doing so in areas where they feel gifted. It is proposed that such an evaluation be conducted every six months so as to enable church leadership to facilitate necessary changes as needed and to keep track of the church's progress in embracing ministry.

It is hoped that such evaluations will not only reveal weaknesses, but also strengths of the program. The program will gradually be transformed as it will be made to maximize on its strengths while making improvements on any weak areas identified.

As noted above, monthly meetings with pastors under the pilot program will also provide another avenue for evaluation, albeit informal. Constant feedback received during the course of the six months will be used to effect timely adjustments to the program. Monthly meetings may, however, not be feasible once this program goes beyond the pilot level and expands to other cities. At that point the author may encourage pastors to form their own regional coordination teams where they can meet to review their progress without the author having to be present. The goal is for the pastors

in Zimbabwe to eventually be able to use this manual independently in their churches without having to rely on the author to personally run the seminars.

Summary

This training program is viewed as only the beginning of a dialogue about ministry with both leaders and members of the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe. With the implementation of this program, the author hopes to reshape perception and practice of ministry in Zimbabwe to make it more compliant with the model set forth in the early church.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusion

The Bible teaches that all believers have been given spiritual gifts to equip them for ministry (Eph 4:12). These gifts are not given for personal glory. They are given for the benefit the whole church (1 Pet 4:10; 1 Cor 12:6, 7). The church is likened to a human body, with its various parts that together contribute to the proper functioning of the whole (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:12-30). As with the parts of the body, no member is to see himself or herself as being more important than others, but all are to value one another, rejoice at one another's success and share the pain and sorrow of one another when failure occurs or misfortune strikes.

This dissertation has taken the position that God entrusted His work into the hands of all members of the body of Christ, and that this commission has not been extended to members of the clergy alone. It was noted that the distinction between clergy and laity is not a biblical concept, but an idea that crept into the church after the apostolic era. It is a departure from Scripture when today's Christians view ministry as the responsibility of professional ministers and all lay members as recipients of ministry rather than ministers in their own right.

In studying ministry trends, both in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world, it was noted that the most successful and growing churches today are those that structure their

ministry in a manner that focuses on the needs of both their own members and the surrounding community. As the needs in the church and the community differ, it makes it critical that people of different gifts be engaged in ministry as it is the diversity of their gifts that increases the chances of providing the variety of ministries that have the potential of meeting these varying needs. It is also important that ministry methods used at any given place suit the contextual dynamics of each place as there are no methods that will have equal appeal across the globe.

The dissertation focused on ministry from the Zimbabwean context. It was encouraging to note that lay people in Zimbabwe form a crucial segment of the ministry teams in the church. They are involved in running services at the local church, conducting evangelistic campaigns, and organizing both inreach and outreach¹ programs for the church. In Zimbabwe there is a very low pastor membership ratio (1:3370), and the average pastor oversees six or more churches.² This has resulted in much of the work of the local church being run primarily by lay people, with pastors playing a supervisory role to the local elders and departmental leaders. The lay people have done commendable work in the way they have taken ownership of church work and invested themselves in its daily operations.

What is of concern in the Zimbabwean situation is that there seems to be a limited understanding of ministry that often associates it only with activities that bring new members into the church. This misconception has the unintended result of making

¹Inreach refers to programs aimed at meeting the needs of members of the church while outreach refers to programs aimed at ministering to the needs of non-members. It is hoped that inreach programs will enhance membership retention while outreach will bring new members into the church.

²*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook Online* (accessed October 4, 2008).

members with gifts other than those relevant to evangelism undervalue their contribution to the mission of the church and thereby render the church incapable of realizing its ministry potential due to the non-participation or limited involvement of such members in ministry.

It is the conviction of the author that if the church in Zimbabwe can enhance its efforts to involve every member in ministry, and to have the members participate according to their respective spiritual gifts, the church will enjoy faster growth and greater health at the local church. The idea of gifts will also need to be stretched to encompass all the abilities and capabilities of an individual. This will ensure that members look at every personal potential they have as an opportunity for ministry, instead of unnecessarily spending time trying to establish whether their abilities fit within the definition of being a spiritual gift or not.

It is not the intention of this dissertation to discourage people from participation in ministry for which they are not exceptionally gifted. As members of the body of Christ put their gifts to work, there will be much overlap in the different ministries that people are involved in. At the same time, some who do not have an outstanding gift relevant for a certain ministry can still participate in that ministry to the extent of their ability. It is recommended however, that when each person tries to identify an area to regard as their primary ministry, this should be done in consideration of the individual's gifts. At the same time, people who feel somewhat inhibited with respect to a certain ministry should not be pressurized into such ministry as this can only result in frustration and guilt.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the church in Zimbabwe embrace a philosophy of ministry that seeks to involve every member in ministry. It is also recommended that such ministry be promoted in the context of the respective gifts of the individual members. Leaders will need to minimize prescriptive approaches to ministry, whereby every member is expected to participate in a ministry that has been chosen by church leadership, irrespective of whether the members show signs of possessing gifts relevant for that ministry or not. Even as church leaders still have a responsibility to cast a vision and chart the course for the rest of the members, this should be done in an atmosphere where there is flexibility and respect for limitations that some members may have with respect to specific ministries.

For there to be a paradigm shift in the way participation in ministry is perceived and promoted across the country, there will need to be a change in the understanding and philosophy of ministers and church leadership on the subject. It is therefore recommended that this dissertation be used by the theology department at Solusi University as a reference resource for ministers in training as they prepare to fill pastoral and leadership positions in the church. Solusi would also do well to develop a course in lay ministry based on the model laid out in this dissertation.

It is recommended that pastors in the field receive some in-service education on the gifts-based approach to lay ministry. As suggested in chapter 5 of this dissertation, this can be done through seminars presented during annual workers retreats. It is also recommended that the Zimbabwe Union print copies of the training manual attached as

Appendix C of this dissertation and make them available to pastors, lay leaders and other interested lay people through the Adventist Book Center.

While it is commendable that the church is heavily involved in evangelism, it is recommended that it also step up efforts to cater for the needs of members in order to reduce the high percentage loss of members that the church is experiencing every year.³ One way this can be enhanced is by helping those members who are capable of contributing to the creation and sustenance of good nurturing and membership retention programs to see this as constituting ministry in the fullest sense of the word and not as being of secondary significance to the exercise of bringing members into the church. Individual members are urged to view every skill, ability or passion they have as a resource they can use in ministering to the spiritual, social, physical, emotional, as well as any other needs that may be present among their fellow members.

When ministry occurs, it is recommended that those involved be given encouragement and affirmation and that this be done in a manner that shows that the church values all ministry contributions equally and that no one's contribution is viewed as being of greater value than that of another. This can be done through recognition sessions that seek to bring to the attention of the church the contributions of all members involved in ministry, including those involved in ways that are humble and easy to overlook.

It is recommended that the church outgrow the idea of embracing only traditional forms of ministry, but that it seek to employ innovation and to utilize various forms of

³For more on membership loss in Zimbabwe see General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "World Church Statistics—Zimbabwe Union Conference."

modern technology to reach both members and non-members. The church will need to explore ways in which the Internet, television and other forms of electronic media can be used as avenues of executing ministry. Church members with various professional skills are urged to seek ways in which they can offer their services for the advancement of the church's ministry. All this will require a mindset that sees technological and other skills as part of the inventory of gifts that God has placed in His church to equip it for ministry.

Finally, it is recommended that ministry be not reduced to a set of techniques and strategies, but that through prayer and humble submission, the Holy Spirit be constantly given His rightful place as the underlying power behind all the ministry ventures of the church.

APPENDIX A

LAY MINISTRY SURVEY

(To be Administered to Zimbabweans Living in the United States of America)

Instructions: Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. The purpose of this survey is to seek to establish the level of participation by lay people in the ministry of the church in Zimbabwe. Further the survey seeks to assess the extent to which lay people's participation is done in a manner that matches their giftedness. Please take a few moments to answer the questions below. If you feel you do not have a suitable answer to a specific question, you may leave it blank.

Note: This survey is aimed at assessing your ministry experience while you were living in Zimbabwe. It is based on the last twelve months of your stay in Zimbabwe.

1. During your last 12 months in Zimbabwe, did you hold office at your church?
Yes ☐ No ☐

2. During your last 12 months in Zimbabwe, how often were you involved in a ministry activity in the church?
a. about 10 times b. less than 10 times c. more than 10 times d. I was not involved.

3. In your opinion, were your spiritual gifts/talents or skills being utilized in a ministry activity at your church? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Were there ways you wished you could be involved in ministry but which were not facilitated at your church? Yes ☐ No ☐
5. Were you at any time appointed to serve in a ministry task or capacity that you felt you were not gifted for? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. Did you ever think you were not able to minister in a certain way until you tried it out and experienced success? Yes ☐ No ☐
7. Were there areas where you felt your ability to minister was strengthened by training provided through some department of the church? Yes ☐ No ☐
8. Circle the statement that best represents your belief:
- a. All church members have one or more gifts/talents or skills that can be used for ministry.
 - b. Most church members have one or more gifts/talents or skills that can be used for ministry.
 - c. A few church members have one or more gifts/talents or skills that can be used for ministry.
9. Circle the statement that best represents your opinion?

- a. My local church placed equal value on all the different gifts/talents/skills present in the church.
- b. My local church seemed to place more value on some gifts/talents/skills than it did on others.

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION FORMS

GIFTS-BASED LAY MINISTRY SEMINAR-EVALUATION FORM

Presenter _____

Please take a moment to complete this evaluation and let us know your assessment of this seminar.

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "poor" and 5 being "very good," please indicate your opinion of these presentations, based on the following statement:

The presentations were engaging and they kept me interested. Circle your answer.

1 2 3 4 5

2. The quality of presentations was: too complex_____, too simple_____, just right_____

3. What topic, if any, would you like to see added to this manual?

4. What aspects of this seminar, if any, did you find most helpful?

5. What aspects of the seminar, if any, did you find least helpful?

6. What can be done to make this seminar more relevant to the needs of your church?

7. Please check all statements that apply to you. After this seminar I . . .

_____ know what my spiritual gifts are.

_____ know how to discover my gifts.

_____ am more confused about the subject of spiritual gifts and lay ministry.

_____ know skills that I have that can be used in ministry.

_____ I knew my spiritual gifts before I attended this seminar.

8. Please check all statements that apply to you. I feel ministry . . .

_____ should be left to be done only by pastors and elders.

_____ is the responsibility of some members of the church.

_____ is the responsibility of all members of the church

GIFTS-BASED LAY MINISTRY EVALUATION FORM

Instructions: We are constantly seeking to find ways of improving our ministry programs and your input will be valuable to us as we seek to study the current situation in our church. Please take a few moments to answer the attached questions. If you feel you do not have a suitable answer to a specific question you may leave it blank.

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not satisfied" and 5 being "very satisfied," How satisfied are you with the ministry programs at our church? Circle your answer.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Are you eager to participate in one or more ministries at this church?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are you currently involved in a ministry at the church?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐

3. Do you feel you have a clear understanding of what your spiritual gifts are?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If not, do you need help on how to discover your gifts?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐

4. In your opinion, are your spiritual gifts/talents or skills being currently utilized adequately in a ministry activity at this church? Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Are there ways you wish you could be involved in ministry but which are not facilitated at this church? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please list examples: _____

6. Are you currently serving in a ministry for which you feel you are not gifted?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please take time to share this with one of our elders and have him or her assist you consider your options.

7. Did you ever think you were not able to minister in a certain way until you tried it out and experienced success? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please share examples: _____

8. Are there areas where you feel your ability to minister was strengthened by training provided through some department of the church? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please share examples: _____

9. Please identify the statement that best represents your opinion?

- a. My local church places equal value on all the different gifts/talents/skills present in the church.
- b. My local church seems to place more value on some gifts/talents/skills than it does on others.

10. Please list ways you feel this church could better minister to our congregation as well as to our community:

Congregation: _____

Community: _____

APPENDIX C

MANUAL FOR MOBILIZATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN LAY MINISTRY

A Training Guide for Church Leaders and Lay People

DAY ONE

A. BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

When Jesus started His ministry on earth, He called a band of disciples whom He mentored to become ministers for His kingdom. In spite of having great ability as a teacher and preacher, Jesus did not monopolize the work of ministry. He allowed finite human beings to be participants in spreading the good news of the kingdom. He saw in His ministry room for both the most talented as well as the not-so-talented disciple. The New Testament writings give evidence that from the inception of the church, it was God's desire that all members play a role in the furthering of His cause on earth. For this purpose, God gave to each member one or more spiritual gifts that they could use as they participated in the work of ministry.

Look up the following Bible texts and see what they say about involvement in ministry:

1. God gave to *all* believers spiritual gifts to be used in ministry

- 1 Pet 4:10 – *Each* person has received a gift.
- 1 Cor 12:6 – There are different gifts and workings, but God/Holy Spirit works all of them in *all* people.
- Therefore: Every believer has a gift.

2. God expects ministry to be done by all members

- Romans 12:6-8 – Since we have different gifts, let *each* person exercise his or her own gifts. Ministers and church leaders are expected to help the church members discover and exercise their gifts in ministry instead of doing all the ministry of the church by themselves.

Ellen G. White makes a very persuasive argument that the pastor should facilitate the whole church into working for God rather than do all the work by himself or herself.

She writes,

In some respects the pastor occupies a position similar to that of the foreman of a gang of laboring men or the captain of a ship's crew. They are expected to see that the men over whom they are set, do the work assigned to them correctly and promptly, and only in case of emergency are they to execute in detail.

The owner of a large mill once found his superintendent in a wheel-pit, making some simple repairs, while a half-dozen workmen in the line were standing by, idly looking on. The proprietor, after learning the facts, so as to be sure that no injustice was done, called the foreman to his office and handed him his discharge with full pay. It was given in these words: "I employed you to keep six men at work. I found the six idle, and you doing the work of but one. Your work could have been done just as well by any one of the six. I cannot afford to pay the wages of seven for you to teach the six how to be idle."¹

This story illustrates the importance of aiming to involve all church members in ministry activity. Such an approach to ministry will ensure that more work is done and that all members have a chance to reach their potential as God has equipped and empowered them.

- Eph 2:10 - Points out that all of us believers were created by God for good works. None is to sit idle in the church, but we are each to fill the places in ministry that God has designed for us.

¹Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 197, 198.

3. Ministry to be done in accordance with the gifts of each member

- 1 Pet 4:10 - Each member to serve God according to the gifts that have been bestowed upon him or her.
- Many of us have more than one gift, and this will imply involvement in various kinds of ministries. Our primary focus, however, should be in those ministries where we have the strongest gifts, while we continue to avail ourselves to serve as needed in those areas where we have limited ability.

4. Gifts given according to the needs of the church

- Eph 4:11, 12 – Gifts given for the purpose of equipping the church for ministry, so that the church may be built up. God will therefore bestow gifts according to the needs He assesses in any given community and congregation.
- 1 Cor 12:7 – Manifestation of the Spirit given for the common good of the church.

5. Gifts given at the Holy Spirit's discretion

- 1 Cor 12:11 - Spiritual gifts are given to each believer, according to the Holy Spirit's discretion. Therefore, none should make any specific gift a requirement for all believers to possess, neither should any feel they deserve credit for the kind of gifts they have.

6. The early church was a lay movement.

In today's terms, Jesus would be called a lay person. While He obviously received some education in the synagogue like every boy of his time, he did not receive the formal training that the Pharisees and scribes received. He merely learned his father's trade of carpentry.

As a result many people of his day frequently questioned his authority and training (see Matt 13:53-57). Furthermore, Jesus' disciples were not called from a priestly line. They all came from different walks of life and mostly humble professions. As the church grew soon after Jesus' ascension, many lay people participated in the propagation of the word and in the leadership of the church. Acts 8:1, 4 makes it clear that when persecution broke in Jerusalem it was the scattered lay believers who went about preaching in the places where they fled to for safety.

7. Church has prospered more with lay involvement in ministry

From a historical point of view, the New Testament only records the progress of the church in the first century, where it is clear the church enjoyed massive growth as the apostles and members in general worked together to spread the gospel (Acts 2:42-47; 17:6; 15:35). Beginning in the fourth century AD, the church fell more into the hands of the clergy, who began to play a greater role in the worship service, in preaching and in other forms of ministry. This resulted in the slowing of evangelism and the church could only prosper by being enforced as a state religion.²

It was through the protestant reformation that lay people began to rediscover their role in the ministry of the church, and this has led to greater and faster growth of the church, but there is still much to be done for the laity to fully regain and exercise its role in ministry.³ Beginning in the 1880's there has been renewed interest in spiritual gifts and this takes different forms in different denominations, with some emphasizing

²James H. Rutz, *The Open Church: How to Bring Back the Exciting Life of the First Century Church* (Auburn, ME: The Seed Sowers, 1992), 8, 9.

³Ibid., 13.

2. *Prophecy (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10):*

The Bible portrays prophets as inspired intermediaries who often received direct and authoritative messages from God. One undisputed occurring of the gift of prophecy in the New Testament is the ministry of the apostle John as embodied in his visions that resulted in the writing of the book of Revelation. John himself uses the word “prophecy” in referring to his book (Rev 1:3; 22:19). The New Testament however portrays other occurrences of the prophetic gift that do not seem to have been limited to those who occupied the office of prophet (see 1 Cor 14:29-31). Indeed Paul urges the whole Corinthian church, “eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially to prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1). In commending on this kind of prophetic occurrence, Max Turner concludes, “Prophets are the tested specialists and leading figures; but the whole congregation may (even should) *seek* prophecy (1 Cor 14:1, 5, 39). None is excluded *a priori*, even if God will not in fact distribute any one gift to all (1 Cor 12:14-30).”⁷ The prophetic gift should still be seen as the special gift that God gives to those who speak authoritatively on his behalf, but in a lesser sense this gift may also apply to those who on different occasions are used by God to bring special and timely messages even though by being used in this capacity they do not on an ongoing basis assume the title of prophet.

3. *Healing (Acts 3:1-10; 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30):*

This is the special gift to bring about physical healing to those who are sick. In the Bible, this gift usually takes place in a miraculous way rather than through the administration of medicine. In looking at the biblical record, it appears plausible to

⁷Turner, 212.

conclude that some people may be given this gift on an ongoing basis as happened with the apostles (Acts 5:12-16).

The Bible appears to give room for exercise of this gift by people who ordinarily do not possess it. James' injunction on those who are sick to go to the elders of the church and ask for prayer (James 5:13-15) does not seem to presuppose the presence of the gift of healing on all church leaders.

4. Wonders and Miracles (1 Cor 12:10, 28):

This is the ability to serve as avenues through which God can demonstrate his power in supernatural ways. Many wonders and miracles were done by the apostles as they were gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2:43). Miracles and wonders continued to be part of the ministry of the apostles in the early church (Acts 5:12; 6:8; 14:8-10; 15:12; Acts 19:11, 12; Rom 15:19). Paul later lists working of miracles as a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:10, 28). There is also an overlap of some gifts. For example the healing of the sick could signal the presence of the gift of healing. However it can also signal the presence of the gift of faith. James 5: 15 states that a prayer offered in faith will make a sick person well. In another vein, if a healing takes place in a manner that is supernatural; this could also fit under the general category of wonders and miracles.

5. Evangelist (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11)

This is the special ability to share the gospel of salvation with unbelievers in such a manner that elicits conviction and conversion among those with whom it is shared, resulting in them becoming disciples of Christ and responsible members of the church body. Peter had been a timid disciple who denied Jesus three times before His crucifixion (John 18:15, 25-27). But at Pentecost Peter preached with such boldness and

energy that many in his audience could not resist the power and appeal of his message (Acts 2:14-41). That power to preach, though not labeled as such in Acts 2, was indeed a manifestation of a gift of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the message. In Rom 15:18, 19 and 1 Thess 1:5, Paul attributes the power and effectiveness of his preaching to the gentiles to the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit in his ministry. Philip also had this gift (Acts 8:4-6; 21:8). These three are examples of believers who were given the gift of evangelist in order to reach unbelievers with the message of salvation.

6. Apostle (1 Cor 12:28):

Apostleship is the special ability God gives some in the church to assume leadership over several churches and exercise special authority in spiritual matters that is recognized and appreciated by those being led. Apart from the eleven who remained after Judas betrayal of Jesus and subsequent death, the following are also listed as apostles: Matthias (Acts 11:26), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Paul (Rom 1:1), Andronicus (Rom 16:7), and Junias (Rom 16:7).

7. Administration (1 Cor 12:28):

This gift involves ability to understand the needs of the church and wisdom to devise and execute plans that can meet the needs of the church organization that one is overseeing. An example of the exercise of this gift is the ministry of elders that Paul counsels Titus to appoint in the churches (Titus 1:5).

8. Leadership (Rom 12:8):

This is the special ability that some in the body of Christ have to motivate others and to spearhead programs that are geared to promote and achieve the goals of the church in such a way that they win the confidence and cooperation of the church body.

9. *Pastor (Eph 4:11):*

This is the special ability to nurture the body of Christ and provide for its spiritual health and growth. This gift can be utilized through functioning in the office of elder, bishop, or minister. Some may also possess and use this gift even though they may not officially hold any church office.

10. *Teaching (Rom 12:7; Eph 4:11):*

The special ability that some in the church have to impart knowledge and understanding in matters of faith to others in a manner that enhances the learning and understanding of those who are taught.

11. *Knowledge (1 Cor 12:8):*

This is the special ability that some in the church have to acquire and have a comfortable grasp of information that is pertinent to the success and growth of God's cause.

12. *Wisdom (1 Cor 12:7, 8):*

This is a special ability that God gives to some in the church to gain and share insight on how to use available knowledge in a manner that benefits the body of Christ.

13. *Faith (1 Cor 12:9):*

This is the special ability to discern the will of God in a specific situation and be able to trust that God will execute His will and purpose in the present or future of the church. This gift is not the same as the faith which implies belief and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. Rather, it deals more with discerning God's purposes and trusting that they will be fulfilled even though there may be little or no evidence to indicate what is about to happen (see Rom 4:21).

14. *Discerning of Spirits (1 Cor 12:10):*

This is the ability to discern between genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the manifestations of counterfeit spirits. This gift is important considering Jesus' warning that there will be false prophets in the last days (Matt 24:11, 24). An example of the manifestation of this gift is how the church at Ephesus tested those who falsely claimed to be apostles and exposed them (Rev 2:2).

15. *Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor 12:10):*

This is the ability to make known in a familiar language the message of one who is speaking in tongues, thereby resulting in the edification of the listeners.

16. *Missionary (1 Cor 9:19-23):*

This is the special ability that some have to operate in a foreign culture and function effectively in sharing the word of God.

17. *Exhortation (Rom 12:6-8):*

This is the special ability that God gives to some in the church to share words of comfort and encouragement with members of the body of Christ in such a manner that they feel healed and strengthened.

18. *Intercession (James 5:14-16):*

This is the special ability that some in the church have to feel the burdens of others and offer prayer on their behalf.

19. *Martyrdom (Acts 14:19; 20:24):*

This is the special ability that some in the body of Christ have to fearlessly face persecution and be willing to lay down their lives for God's cause if working in an atmosphere hostile to the cause of God.

20. *Mercy (Rom 12:8):*

This is the special ability of some in the church to feel compassion and kindness and empathy toward those undergoing hardship and act to alleviate the suffering.

21. *Giving (Rom 12:8):*

The special ability that God gives to some in the body of Christ to respond by giving cheerfully towards the cause of God or the material needs of others. This gift was especially present among the believers in the Macedonian churches (2 Cor 8:2-5). This gift was also exhibited by Joseph, who was called Barnabas (Acts 4:36, 37).

22. *Helps (1 Cor 12:28):*

This is the special ability that some members of the church have to invest themselves in meeting the needs of others. Tabitha (Dorcas) is an example of one who abounded in such a gift (Acts 9:36).

23. *Hospitality (1 Pet 4:9, 10):*

This is the special ability of some in the body of Christ to welcome people in their homes and provide for their comfort and other needs cheerfully.

24. *Voluntary Poverty (1 Cor 4:11; Phil 4:11, 12):*

This is the ability that some in the church have to endure want or lack of material goods and comfort for the cause of God and not feel deprived.

25. *Exorcism (Acts 5:12, 16):*

This is the special ability God confers upon some in the church to cast out evil spirits. The following texts give examples of cases in which this gift was exercised in the early church: Acts 8:5-7; 16:16-18; 19:11, 12.

26. *Celibacy (1 Cor 7:7-9):*

This is the gift that God gives to some in the church to stay single and devote themselves holy to the cause of God without the day-to-day distractions of family commitments. The presence of this gift presupposes that those with the gift will not suffer undue sexual temptation due to their remaining single. The apostle Paul is an example of one who had this gift (1 Cor 7:7, 8).

27. Service (Rom 12:6, 7):

The gift that some in the church have to realize special tasks that need to be performed in the church and to work voluntarily to meet those needs. An example of the functioning of this gift in the early church is the service provided by deacons (Acts 6:1-3; 1 Tim 3:8-13).

Other lists:

There are various other categorizations of spiritual gifts that present different numbers of gifts.⁸ It is the author's view that none of these lists is exhaustive as there does not appear to be any scriptural evidence on which to base that notion. At the same time, it is possible that when a need arises in the church, God may give a new gift that He has not given before if such a gift will benefit His cause. For the purpose of this training, the list of twenty seven gifts will be used, but with the understanding that this least is not seen as being exhaustive.

2. Ministries and corresponding spiritual gifts

Each of the spiritual gifts listed above has several ministries within which it can be useful. Awareness of these ministries will make it easier for one to know where and

⁸For more information on categorizations of gifts see chapter 2 of Cuthbert Machamire, "A Lay Mobilization Program for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe," (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 2009).

how to minister. In his book, *Unleash Your Church*, Paul R. Ford gives a detailed list of what spiritual gifts correspond with what ministries as well as what ministries correspond with what gifts.⁹ Ford's book can be a good resource in helping members find ministry placements. The principle to remember is that each gift can operate within a variety of ministries. At the same time each ministry can use a variety of gifts. People with specific gifts would need to decide which ministry opportunities available match with their gifts. It is always best for people to choose a ministry venture that they feel passionate about. For example someone with the gift hospitality who has a love for young people may feel very passionate about participating in organizing youth functions for young people in the church. Such a person's ability to use this gift in the context of young people does not imply he or she can feel as comfortable using the same gift in organizing events for seniors. This is why it is necessary to match the gifts with ministries towards which the individuals display some interest.

3. Spiritual gifts and church office

One should not confuse between spiritual gifts and church office. Church offices are humanly designed and they are intended to achieve a smooth running of the church as an organization. Members can use their spiritual gifts within the framework of the church offices but they do not have to be limited or confined by these. For example, one who is an elder may use his or her gift of leadership in the context of the office of an elder. However, an elder may at the same time use other gifts such as teaching, preaching, exhortation, faith, without having to be appointed to a special office to exercise these gifts.

⁹Paul R. Ford, *Unleash Your Church* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2002), 183-191.

It is probably the equating of spiritual gifts with church office that has often contributed to the inadequate lay participation in church programs today. If people assume that having a spiritual gift implies being appointed to a specific church office they are likely to relax when not occupying a church office or when their term of office comes to an end. One needs to realize that church offices are given through appointment by the church body and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church they are usually temporary. Gifts, on the other hand, are apportioned by God through the Holy Spirit and most gifts will usually continue to function and only risk being lost through non-use or lack of practice (see Matt 25:14-28) or otherwise through falling out of favor with God who is the gift giver and enabler.

4. Spiritual gifts and universal Christian responsibilities

There is also need to understand the difference between spiritual gifts and universal Christian responsibilities. There are responsibilities that are expected of every Christian regardless of whether they have a specific spiritual gift or not. The extent and effectiveness with which they can perform these responsibilities will be greatly influenced by their gift mix. For example, not all Christians have the gift of evangelism, but all Christians have the responsibility to share their faith (Matt 5:13-16). The method that one uses to share their faith and the level of success they have will be determined by their type of gifts. Not all Christians have the gift of giving, but this cannot be used as an excuse for one withholding their tithe or not giving an offering when they can afford to. Those with the gift of giving will be inclined to give more generously than those who do not, but giving to the cause of God is a universal expectation for all believers (Mal 3:8-10). Similarly, not all Christians have the gift of faith, but all Christians have the

responsibility to trust their lives into the hand of God in the face of life's uncertainties and dilemmas. While those with the gift of faith will find it easier to exercise such trust, those without the gift are still expected to exercise this trust to the extent that God enables them to.

Christian A. Schwarz notes that failure to understand the difference between spiritual gifts and universal Christian responsibilities poses two dangers.¹⁰ First is the danger of "gift projection," whereby we expect from everyone what should only be expected from those with a specific spiritual gift. This is when, for example, Christians with the gift of evangelism expect from other believers the same level of evangelistic involvement that is normal for those who have the gift. Such an attitude is bound to cause frustration, tension and unnecessary feelings of guilt.

The second danger Schwarz points out is that of disobedience. This happens when some believers try to use the teaching about spiritual gifts to justify their lack of commitment or their non-involvement in church programs. Schwartz points out that there are expectations that have been laid out for every Christian, and that all are expected to have a part in, even though God's expectation for each will differ according to their giftedness.¹¹ While the leadership should not pressurize every member to engage in specific ministries in an identical manner, it is appropriate for the church to educate members about the universal Christian responsibilities, while making them aware that

¹⁰Christian A. Schwarz, *The 3 Colors of Ministry* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001), 48.

¹¹*Ibid.*

their specific gifts will determine how the execution of these responsibilities plays out in their individual lives.

Discussions Questions:

1. The Sign that you have a spiritual gift is when the church appoints you to a church office. a. Yes b. No Support your answer.
2. As proof that one has received the Holy Spirit, one must receive the gift of tongues. a. True b. False Support your answer.

DAY THREE

C. HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

All members are to serve God in ministry in line with their spiritual gifts. None is expected to serve in a manner for which God has not equipped him or her. Here are some suggestions on how you as an individual can discover your spiritual gifts.

1. Volunteer for different ministries

- Volunteering to participate in different ministries is one way to discover your gifts. It is only as you participate in a specific ministry that you can find out whether it gives you fulfillment and if you enjoy some reasonable success in it. Many spiritual gifts assessment instruments are based on your personal experiences, that is, they ask questions about what activities you have been involved in and how much success and fulfillment you derived from them. If you have not tried different ministries, your assessment is limited to those ministries or tasks that you are familiar with. Broadening the number of ministries in which you try yourself out makes it easier for you to more accurately discover areas of ministry for which you are best suited.
- Here is one other benefit of trying out ministries. As they try different ministries, some who were initially timid will develop more skill and grow in confidence in a ministry of their choice.
- For people who are still trying out ministries to discover their gifts, it is important that church leadership give them the freedom to move between ministries as they explore different possibilities. This is a better approach than to have someone stuck for a whole year or two in a ministry he or she does not enjoy and is ineffective.

2. What do you have a passion for?

Passion can be a great indicator in discovering our gifts. Many believers already have things that they are passionate about, and they do those things on a daily basis, even though they do not define them as gifts. Eddy Hall says that if you have had problems finding your niche in ministry, it may be because you have a narrow definition of ministry, one that limits ministry to fulfilling spiritual needs only. He says if you can think of any one way in which God uses you to meet other people's needs, any kind of needs; that is essentially one way you minister.¹² You may just need to develop your ministry further along that line.

Don and Katie Fortune give a very simple test for establishing whether one is functioning in the sphere of his or her gifts. They say joy will be the byproduct of operating within your gift and frustration will be the result of operating outside of it.¹³

- As a believer, what things are you already doing in your community that you enjoy to do and feel you are successful at? Take a moment to consider how you can turn the skills you use for such activities into a ministry in your community. (The list could include hospitality, organization, welfare activities, music, tutoring e.t.c. Ask attendees to add to the list.)

- Marlene Wilson suggests a very creative way of ensuring that people are placed in ministries that best suit them.¹⁴ When working with groups of people (volunteer or paid),

¹²Eddy Hall and Gary Morsch, *The Lay Ministry Revolution: How You Can Join* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 36.

¹³Don and Katie Fortune, *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 37.

¹⁴Marlene Wilson, *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg House, 1983), 35.

she often asks them to write one job that they like best and one that they like the least. As people share their answers, they discover that almost everyone's favorite job is another person's least favorite and that there is someone who enjoys almost any kind of job. Such an exercise can help free people from ministries they signed up for but are not enjoying, allowing them to try other ministries that they would enjoy but are currently being done by someone who does not enjoy them.

3. Verify your effectiveness

Make an honest assessment of yourself to see if you are succeeding in what you do. For example, if you feel you have the gift of evangelism, see if people are being led to Christ through your ministry. If over a long time no one comes to Christ through your ministry, you have good reason to doubt your supposition. Spiritual gifts are given to produce results, thus it is important to verify that your efforts produce some fruit among those you minister to.

4. Seek the opinion others?

One of the best ways to discover your gifts is to listen to your friends and acquaintances. When you are involved in certain ministry activities and other people tell you that they get a blessing through your ministry, that can be a strong indicator of what your gifts are.

Paul R. Ford writes, "When we cannot recognize our own vitality, our family members, friends, or co-workers can provide invaluable insight into the zest which seems to drive our lives. They can see where God's power is revealed most clearly in us"¹⁵

¹⁵Ford, 51.

Ford continues,

This principle of sober estimation is one more great example of why God gave us to one another. Who better to help me see myself and my ministry identity more clearly but those who know me and watch me even when I am not watching or thinking about it? Who better to let me know that I do not have a certain gift I wish I could have than those who love me? Who better to confirm a certain gift than those who watch me in action on a regular basis?¹⁶

If you are convinced you have a certain gift and no one else around you seems to think that way, that provides a good reason to be skeptical about your possession of that gift.

5. Pray and listen to God's bidding

All believers need to listen to God's voice and hear what He is calling them to.

Without listening to God, there are times when He will call and we won't hear Him.

When we hear God's bidding, we should be willing to trust His leadership, knowing that the success for what he calls us to is determined by God Himself.

Ellen White notes that when we set our hearts to seek God's will for our lives, He will direct us in the way we should go. She writes,

The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised.¹⁷

6. Undergo some training

There are some ministries you may think you are not good at simply because you

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 668.

do not have a grasp of what is involved in them. As trainings for lay ministry are offered at your church, attend those you are able to and see if that can improve your understanding of how certain ministries function and if you have any abilities or passions that match any particular ministry.

7. Spiritual gifts inventory

- You can also discover gifts by taking a spiritual gifts inventory test. There are many of these on the market in Christian bookstores as well as thousands more on the Internet.¹⁸

It is advisable to take more than one test as the results of one test alone may not adequately reveal where one's ministry strengths are. It is also advisable to take these tests at least every two or three years as sometimes new responsibilities in your life may act as windows, revealing gifts in you that you had not discovered in the past.

- A word of caution when dealing with spiritual gifts tests - all these tests have some bias that leans toward the theological understanding of the ones who put them together. They are therefore not all the same. One needs to use them to the extent that they can be useful in determining one's gifts, but avoid embracing them as theological documents to guide one's theological understanding about the delicate topic of spiritual gifts.

- When you take a spiritual gift test, it may also be useful to give one to a friend, family member or fellow church member and ask them to complete it according to how they perceive you. A comparison of the results may help you reach a more objective assessment of what your gifts are.

- It should also be noted that in some parts of Zimbabwe, particularly in the rural areas, it may not be easy to obtain reliable results from administering a spiritual gifts inventory

¹⁸A Google search for "spiritual gifts inventory test" in September 2008 yielded 126,000 results.

test. Traditional Zimbabwean culture is known to the author to uphold modesty to the extent that many respondents would be uncomfortable to respond positively to questions that ask them to identify their strengths. Answers given to questionnaires are likely to be stated in a manner that is perceived to be culturally acceptable but which may not represent reality. It is the view of the author that a spiritual gifts inventory test may not be as reliable in helping people discover their gifts in the Zimbabwean context as the other six steps listed above. People in urban areas are however more likely to benefit from such tests than their rural counterparts.

Discussion Question:

1. What things are you currently doing in your community that could form a basis for a new ministry?
2. Think of one or two ways in which a fellow believer at your church blesses you and others. Take time to talk to him or her and suggest what gift you think he or she has and how he or she can build a ministry around that gift.

DAY FOUR

D. IMPLEMENTING A GIFTS-BASED LAY MINISTRY

We now address the issue of how to implement a spiritual gifts based lay ministry. We will look at ideas about recruitment, training, affirmation of participants, and areas of ministry.

1. Recruiting members for ministry

The following are crucial steps that need to be taken in mobilizing spiritual gifts for lay ministry:

- a. Help members discover their gifts
- b. Invite members to a ministry vision session – set up ministries. This will most likely fall within established departments, but allow for flexibility.
- c. Recruit ministry mentors – these should consist of people who are experienced in the different ministries.
- d. Begin ministry placement – have members choose ministries in which they want to serve. Some of these ministries will fall within established departments of the church, some will not. Always allow flexibility. Invitations to members may be placed in the church bulletin, announced from the pulpit, and personal invitations can be made by those in leadership to individual members.
- e. Have group members brainstorm on how they want to minister.

2. Training members for ministry

- Training of members for ministry may need to be done department by department.

This is because what is involved in each department may differ so much that it may be impossible to present training for all departments to all people all at once. Different

departments may run training sessions at the same time, and encourage people to attend the sessions for the department in which they best feel called to serve. Alternatively, training sessions for different departments may be held at different times. This will allow people who are interested in various departments to have the opportunity to attend trainings for different ministries and thus sharpen their ability to function in more than one ministry.

- Let new people understudy those who are experienced.
- Let leaders exercise a willingness to share responsibility.
- Give permission to fail.

3. Affirming members in ministry

Every member's contribution in ministry is important. Many times we value the contribution of certain gifts more than others. As a church we should affirm all people who participate in ministry activity and let them know that their contribution is an essential part of the completeness of the church's ministry. Here are some ways we can show affirmation to all participants in the ministry of the church.

a. *Schedule recognitions:*

During the course of the year schedule either monthly or quarterly slots where you recognize the contribution of various people in the ministry of the church. This will help members become aware of specific ministries happening in the church and encourage those who want to be a part of those ministries to join. It will also help the members identified in each recognition to see the value of their contribution to ministry and thus make them want to continue their involvement.

- Celebrate both participation and success – It is easier to motivate people through commenting good work done than by criticizing undesirable behavior or lack participation.

b. Recognitions during programs:

When there is an evangelistic campaign, have special moments when you recognize not just the preacher but also those involved in music ministry, ushers, those who invited guests to the meetings, those who conduct follow-up Bible studies both during and after the campaign, those who design and produce hand bills or are involved in other ways of marketing the meetings, those who decorate the church, the leadership and planning team – list goes on and on. The idea is to think of everyone who is involved in some way and honor their contribution.

c. Recognize people in informal ministries:

Find out who in the church is involved in some ministry activities in the community – activities that are not sponsored or supervised by the church. This is very important as the church may not involve every single individual in a ministry activity that is sponsored or run by the church. Members need to be encouraged to find ways of ministering during the week on their own as individuals or in teams that they set up on their own which are not appointed by the church.

4. Areas of ministry

When recruiting members into ministry we must keep in mind all the facets of ministry. The ministries of the church can be broken into three major groupings, namely evangelism, nurturing, and administration.

a. Evangelism:

Evangelism covers all ministry endeavors that are aimed at bringing new people into the church. This aspect of ministry often receives good attention, and this is appropriate, for evangelism is the primary reason for the church's existence on earth. It is to invite the lost into the kingdom of God.

b. Nurturing:

Nurturing is the aspect of ministry that focuses on taking care of the needs of members that are in the church already. This aspect of ministry covers many ministry activities that are done on Sabbath to draw the members closer to God. It also covers programs run during the middle of the week that are designed to meet the needs of members. Eph 4:16 makes it clear that through gifts given to some members, the body of Christ "grows and builds itself up." This shows that both evangelism and nurturing are part of the mix of gifts that God gives to the church. Some ministry programs may also be capable of functioning both in an evangelistic manner while at the same time meeting the needs of the church members.

c. Administration:

Administration refers to any ministry that is meant to maintain the smooth functioning of the church. Such ministries may not directly bring new members into the church, but they help improve the health of those that do. This category includes all the administration that the church leadership does to coordinate the different departments. It covers ministries such as treasury, which may not go out into the community to preach, but ensures that all ministries receive appropriate funding as arranged by the church.

It is important that these three areas of ministry be seen in their full importance, for none can operate without the other. Often there is more clout given to those who bring new members into the church, while little or no mention is made about the importance to keep these people in the church. In many cases, these new believers leave the church unnoticed. It may be a good idea for the church to start keeping record not only of how many new people come into the church each year but also how many stayed in the church and what it is that was done to help them stay committed to Christ and growing in grace.

Discussion Questions:

1. Name a ministry that is going on in your church that church leadership needs to acknowledge and recognize. (Ask attendees to name some area of contribution that can be recognized. The following are some of the ministry areas that need to be named – departmental leaders, all participants in those departments, whether or not they hold church office. Also remember to include people who perform ministries for which they don't need to hold elected office. This includes ministries like grief ministries, hospital visitation, volunteers in community services, participants in hospitality ministries at the church etc.)
2. What in your opinion needs to be done in your church to get more people to participate in ministry?

DAY FIVE

E. PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE GIFTS-BASED LAY MINISTRY

1. Base ministry on gifts, not programs

Many churches run their ministry on a program-based mode. This means they outline programs they wish to accomplish for any given year and then find personnel to execute their plans. Paul R. Ford makes a disturbing observation about the program-based church,

Too often the program-based church is overly dependent on the gifts of one preacher or small leadership group, with little thought given to prepare all the people to develop *their* ministry gifts for the church and world around them. Too often we overemphasize preaching and understate the roles of mercy, service, lay pasturing, and administration. The result is that many churches offer a strong preaching or teaching ministry from the pulpit but little true body life in the congregation, great large group ministry but minimal shared ministry among the laity. Too few people are too busy, too powerful, and too tired – and the church suffers.¹⁹

As Ford observes, a church benefits more when it treats all its members as parts of the human body, and strives to develop each member and incorporate him or her into the daily function and ministry of the church. Such incorporation can only happen smoothly when the engagement to offices is determined by each individual's gifts, talents and skills.

Basing ministry on gifts, however, does not mean that members will not participate in ministries for which they are not exceptionally gifted. Many members will participate in various ministries in a supportive role, for even those who are specially gifted cannot stand alone in executing their ministry. As we seek to help members

¹⁹Ford, 30.

identify what their primary ministries can be, this should be done in a manner that seeks to guide them towards ministries that are in line with their respective gifts.

2. Diversity in ministry

In recruiting members for ministry, we should emphasize the diversity of the ways in which people can minister. Members will need to realize that there is room for them to function in ministry in line with who they are. They do not need to change to be like someone else.

For purposes of ministry, the idea of gifts should be expanded to encompass any natural talents or abilities that one may have. Many of these may not meet a strict theological definition of what a spiritual gift is. However, for purposes of ministry it is clear that God expects his people to utilize whatever endowment or advantage they have for purposes of furthering His cause. Such an open-ended approach to the subject will enable the church to utilize a variety of endowments that God has given to its members without paying too much attention to terminology. Christian A. Schwarz summarizes this point well,

Whatever phrases we might use in order to describe our experience – “natural abilities,” “supernatural anointings,” “charismatic occurrences,” “motivational gifts,” “inspirational gift,” “sign gifts,” etc. – the point is that we always speak about gifts as tools from God that should be used for his glory and for the development of his church. In light of this challenge, discussions regarding terminology may not be meaningless, but they are certainly only secondary.

When we take a closer look at these distinctions, we can see that they are often motivated by the attempt to isolate one specific way to experience God and to position it against other ways in which God wants to interact with us.²⁰

²⁰Christian Schwarz, 50.

3. Team spirit in ministry

- 1 Cor 12:21-26 - As members of the church we all need one another other, because we depend on one another's gifts for the smooth functioning of the church. None should feel that their gift is so important that they can do without others. We should not try to outshine one another. Rather, we should rejoice at one another's success and be saddened by the failures of our fellow members, because as members of one body, what affects one of us affects all of us. There cannot be happiness among us if some of us are aching.

- 1 Cor 12:27-30 - We need to realize that none of us, no matter how talented, can by ourselves perform all the functions needed for a church to prosper and accomplish its mission.

- Each of our gifts does not make up the completeness of what ministry consists of. We each bring a part that contributes to the whole. The problem that often happens in ministry is that many people who have a specific gift look at ministry only through the angle of that gift and often wonder why others do not see the way they see. As Don and Katie Fortune point out in their book *Discover Your God-Given Gifts*, our gifts, like sunglasses, often color the way we perceive reality.²¹ Someone with the gift of serving will see opportunities for service at every turn, while an exhorter will see an opportunity to exhort people in just about every situation, the giver will see opportunities to meet other people's needs and a compassionate person will recognize hurts and wounds that need healing and see endless opportunities to express love and a caring spirit. We should

²¹Fortune and Fortune, 25.

however resist the temptation to define ministry through the narrowness of our own specific gift. Don and Katie Fortune make the following observation,

God has purposely limited and focused our giftedness so that we must work together and remain dependant on each other in order to grasp the whole truth.

Remember the six blind men who went to “see” an elephant? One felt the side and said an elephant is like a wall. The next felt the tusk and claimed an elephant is like a spear. The third felt the trunk and likened it to a snake. The fourth felt a leg and said an elephant is like a tree. The fifth, touching an ear declared an elephant is like a fan. The sixth felt the tail and insisted an elephant is like a rope. No one was altogether right, yet neither was he entirely wrong. It was only when they got all their observations together that they “saw” the whole elephant.²²

In ministry, we need each other’s view points and contributions in order to come up with a balanced perception of ministry as well as to implement a ministry that is complete. We cannot function efficiently by ourselves, and the first thing that is required is for us to realize our need of one another. This realization should result in our desire to work harmoniously with others, ready to learn and benefit from their contribution, while standing willing to always do our part and be of assistance to those who can benefit from our contribution and input.

- Human Body (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-30):
- One of the best illustrations in the Bible about the need for team work is Paul’s illustration of the human body.
- Read the two passages above.

The following insights can be draw from these passages:

- Rom 12:4, 5: As believers we are all members of the body of Christ.
- Rom 12:4, 6: As members of the body we all have different functions/gifts.

²²Ibid.

- 1 Cor 12:12-20: If the whole body was one part, it would not be able to function. If the all members of the church had one and the same gift, the church would not be able to function. Like the human body, for the church to function effectively and efficiently, it needs people who can perform a diversity of responsibilities. If all members were good at only one function and not the rest, the church as an organization would be severely crippled and it would literally be threatened with extinction.

Discussion Questions

1. In recruiting members for ministry, we should be guided by the program that we are trying to implement, i.e. our goal should be to have enough members participate so the program can succeed and the church can reach its numerical goals. a. True b. False Support you answer.
2. If the church has leaders who are gifted enough, they do not need participation from the rest of the members for the church to reach each ministry potential. a. True b. False Support your answer.

F. EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS MINISTRIES

As ministries continue to function, it is important to constantly evaluate their programs. With respect to implementing a gifts-based ministry, there is need to regularly check if the proportion of members involved in ministry is increasing. The following are some areas that may be evaluated with respect to the spiritual gifts ministry of the church:

1. Assess the percentage of the membership involved in various ministries and establish if this percentage is growing, static or dwindling. The aim is to keep the percentage of participants constantly growing and getting it to 100% or as close as possible to that figure. (Note: This assessment should focus on whether people are involved in what they consider to be their primary areas of giftedness. Otherwise, there are other areas where almost the whole church participates in a ministry which are not necessarily related to their gifts. For example, when members make a contribution to a fund for the needy or they participate in grief support for the bereaved, this is something that most members get to participate in and does not necessarily call for one to be particularly gifted in that area of ministry.)
2. Assess if members feel their involvement in ministry matches their spiritual gifts. Feedback from participants can be obtained through conducting regular meetings at intervals agreed to by the ministry teams.
3. Assess if each ministry meets its set goals and objectives.
4. Find out what suggestions members have for ministry – ask them to express what they see as the positives and the negatives of the ministry program.

5. Measure level of general satisfaction and dissatisfaction among members with respect to the ministry program.
6. Be willing to modify your program to accommodate the concerns of the participants.

Appendix B provides a survey that can be used to evaluate the spiritual gifts ministry of the church on a six monthly basis (form entitled, “Gifts-based Lay Ministry Evaluation Form”). This evaluation is to be used to identify areas of success as well as where improvements may be needed. Feedback relating to the seminar material is to be forwarded to the author for consideration when revised versions of the manual are being prepared.

G. SUMMARY

For a spiritual gifts based lay ministry to take effect, there needs to be constant education of the members on the subject of spiritual gifts and lay ministry. This manual can be a useful tool in providing such training. The training approach should aim at helping people find their ministry match and serve God through it. The instructor should avoid presenting a prescriptive approach that dictates to members how they are to minister irrespective of their gift composition and where their passions lie. The goal of the church should always be to involve all members in ministry in the context of their diverse spiritual gifts.

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